

Welcome to our new Board members...

***Chris Blencowe – Invited Director**

Chris is a Chartered Accountant with 31 years in Public Practice, 27 of these as a Partner at Boyce Chartered Accountants in Cooma. After retiring from Boyce in 2005, Chris has done consultancy work and has just commenced a full time position as Chief Financial Officer at D Group, a plumbing and civil engineering business in Canberra.

Chris is also currently a co Trustee of the Coolringdon Trust in Cooma where his role is to coordinate the finances of the farming operation.

Chris has an active interest in Farming on the Monaro and has worked with a number of Farmers in this region, specifically in the areas of Financial Planning and Succession Planning.

Chris is currently working with MFS to consolidate a sound financial operating and reporting system as well as advice with budgets and financial management of our account.

***Richard Simpson–Invited Director (acting, awaiting approval from CSIRO)**

Richard is a research scientist with CSIRO's Sustainable Agriculture Flagship, a major new initiative that brings together CSIRO's research in agricultural and environment sustainability. He leads a research stream in the Flagship entitled: 'Functional soils for sustainable farming systems'.

Richard's personal research has spanned a broad area of pasture systems agronomy including pasture management, botanical composition, feeding value for livestock, plant nutrition and fertiliser use. He has provided agronomic support for the development of computer-based decision support tools (GrazFeed and GrassGro) for Australia's grazing industries and, with NSW DPI, is presently developing a P-fertiliser calculation tool for pastures. Most recently, his research has been focused on soil biology and root damage, management of phosphorus, and land capability in grazing systems.

Richard is currently working with MFS to develop a research and Development Business Plan which will give the group future direction and focus and clarify research priorities.

***Oliver Cay - Elected Producer Director**

Oli is currently a part owner and manager of 1700 ha as well as Overseer of 1600 ha at Bungarby in the southern Monaro. This is a mixed grazing enterprise consisting of sheep (meat and wool) and cattle.

Oli also owns part of and oversees 720 ha at Berridale in the central Monaro as well as an active involvement in the management of Warrembool Past Co. based at Corowa in the Riverina which controls 3320 ha of mixed dry land cropping (wheat, canola and triticale), sheep (meat and wool) and cattle.

Previously Oli has managed cropping and cattle properties in the Southern Highlands and Corowa and has completed an Advanced Diploma in farm management at Orange Agricultural College.

Oli is currently working with MFS to develop an innovative communication strategy to members.

***Lisa Phillips- Elected Producer Director**

Lisa runs a farm business which includes a self replacing merino flock, an Angus breeding operation and a second-cross lamb finishing enterprise (aims to turn of 1300 pa.).

Lisa has an Agricultural Science Degree from Sydney University and has two young children.

Lisa is also currently working with MFS to develop an effective communication strategy to members.

Remaining Board Members.

*David Mitchell and Richard Taylor Producer Directors (until August 2010)

Mike Stephens - MS&A Director (until 2011)

Some **feedback from the departing interim board** members which MFS acknowledges and is working to address;

- develop a MFS Business Plan (5 years)
- drive enthusiasm / promote membership / continually aim to deliver better quality information
- work on information delivery and quality (more electronic?)
- more self promotion organised marketing of MFS
- more on-ground trials to visualize and base farm walks around and more member focus

CommonwealthBank
Regional and Agribusiness Banking



LAMBPRO
linking genes and markets

What's MFS Doing??

- ❖ MFS has re-submitted a **3 year "GrassGro" project** under Round 2 of the "FarmReady" program to extend the use of this program as a decision making tool across the Monaro. The Project once again is applying for approx \$90,000 to deliver a strong extension and training program to integrate the use of this software program as a planning and risk management tool for MFS members. Announcement of successful projects will be announced before Xmas or early in the New Year.
- ❖ MFS is using \$6000 provided by Southern Rivers CMA to collect and analyse a further 4 representative soil types which will expand the soil data base to NINE sites across the Monaro. This will ensure that future GrassGro simulations are much more targeted/calibrated to specific Monaro soil types/grazing systems.
- ❖ MFS has received funding approval to run two "Evergraze" demonstration trials on both a basalt and a granite site. The trial will test the following hypothesis;
 - What are the most appropriate perennial legumes for the Monaro in terms of animal production?
 - What are the optimal, appropriate species mixes for the two soil types (basalt & granite) based on persistence and animal production?
- ❖ MFS is currently organising a local **XBred Lamb Shearing Trial** which will look at the benefits, if any, of shearing XBred lambs prior to sale in terms of weight gain and grass-seed. This trial will have three trial sites, Nimmitabel, Bombala and a feedlot. This trial is due to start in Jan/Feb 2010.
- ❖ MFS recently trialed a "**Webinar**" presentation (speakers present through the internet) for our Spring Field Day in an effort to transfer information more time and cost effectively to members at this busy time of year. The technology worked well and it is hoped that this approach may be used in the future to enable members to participate in presentations from their own homes, via the internet. We need to improve on speaker phone capabilities or use computer sound next time. Feedback from the day included;

- *Good questions, timing good. Possibly worthwhile technology to use again. Gives people access to presenters at a cheaper rate.*
 - *Very happy to do a webinar again, as it does not cut into work time and for a field day you can loose more than half a day.*
 - *Record the webinar so if can't make it, still get access to it. Participate in webinars regularly and prefer this method of presentations/seminars*
 - *Good idea, do more. Can't get that same feeling you do at a face to face but fantastic that we can get cheaper access to presenters*
 - *Liked the idea of being in small groups across the Monaro. Great use of technology. Producers have to lobby for agriculture's position in the CPRS and Julian highlighted this.*
- ❖ **Women in MFS...** Following the 2009 survey MFS is following up on two priorities identified;
1. MFS in conjunction with Boyce & Co is organising a **Farm Accountancy/Business skills workshop** in Feb/Mar 2010 in Cooma. This interactive workshop will aim to improve the book keeping/farm accounting/business skills of MFS members and will focus on skills such as managing farm budgets, designing spreadsheets and producing relevant & useful financial reports.
 2. MFS has recently submitted a second project submission (was unsuccessful the first time round) under "Community Action Grants" to run a series of business/family/partnership communications workshop's.



Upcoming Events

❖ **Practical Ram Selection Workshop**
Thursday 25th Feb 2010, Hazeldean, 9.30-3.00pm

This is a **hands-on** workshop (presented by **Allan Casey and Doug Alcock**, NSW DPI) for commercial flock breeders – both wool and meat sheep. This **FREE** workshop will assist you to:

- **confidently and accurately select rams** – both wool or meat breeds
- **buy the best value for \$money rams** for your flock's breeding objective
- **breed the best progeny** using Estimated Breeding Values and Index Values
- **drive productivity and profitability** through ongoing genetic improvement

More information please contact Hazeldean, Cooma on (02) 6453 5555

❖ **Accountancy/Book Keeping Workshop for Women – Boyce & Co – Feb/Mar 2010**

- ❖ Follow up day in March/April 2010 to the **2009 Carbon Day Out**. This day will aim to again bring leading speakers to the Monaro to discuss directly with farmers, the impacts of policy decisions and outcomes from the Copenhagen climate change/carbon summit in Dec 2009.
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**Photo of dam at "Kydrabah"*

Howard Charles ("Kydrabah") is in the process of installing watering infrastructure as part of his recent dam construction. It took approximately 12 months to fill naturally, has an approx 93ML capacity, and is lined adequately with the original clay. The dam is strategically placed so that water can be pumped in two

directions to hill-top storage tanks. Water will then be directed (gravity fed) to further watering points in fenced sub-divisions, throughout the property. The dam has been constructed with flow-through piping and rock landscaping to ensure a continued natural flow.

The dam has enabled environmental benefits as well as attracted wildlife to the site.

Barbers Pole test for the Monaro – Chris Haylock Bombala LHPA Veterinarian

There is something new in the battle against Barber's Pole worm. Not a new drench, but a new way of testing to see if Barber's Pole are building up in your sheep. This test works by detecting traces of blood in the dung and takes about 40 minutes for a result. This test is most useful to give you a snap-shot of the barbers pole worm burden across all mobs in your flock to help with the decision, "to drench or not to drench".

The test is quick and easy and a kit costs \$200 which contains enough dipsticks for 50 tests and all the equipment to do it yourself. Kits are available through rural resellers (Ancare).

On Monaro properties, Barber's Pole often occurs in just one or two mobs and this test allows quick testing of most mobs

The drawback to this test is that it tells us nothing about the other worms in the sheep. Worm egg counts would still be necessary to get the full picture on parasites.

The following link gives access to "**MetAccess**" a CSIRO developed computer tool for rapid analysis of historical weather data. It gives users a simple and flexible way to quantify weather variability and assess the likelihood of weather events ie. probability of frosts, rainfall events above certain mm targets (sowing opportunities) etc. Long term weather records can be summarized in tables / graphs so users can better plan to manage the impacts of weather on their farm business.

<http://www.csiro.au/resources/metaccess.html>

MFS to attract CSIRO funding for Dual Purpose Cropping Trials

MFS members recently attended a field day with three CSIRO Scientists (pasture agronomists and animal scientists) at Delegate Station. Dr John Kirkegaard (CSIRO) explained that the more traditional cropping areas such as Young, Harden, Wagga etc have attracted the majority of funding in the past however GRDC funds are now available to look at the more traditional grazing areas for cropping, particular in the "high-rainfall-zones"(HRZ) of Australia.



**Canola crop windrowed pre- harvest at Delegate Stn*

This creates a fantastic opportunity for growers on the Monaro to learn more about the role dual purpose crops can play in a grain and graze farming system. Canola hybrids have a huge potential in this system specifically on certain parts of the Monaro where the long, cool growing season is ideally suited to finish high yielding crops. As John Jeffreys demonstrated on the day, the climatic conditions at Delegate look to favoring a March, early sowing of canola which once established can be grazed for a 4-6 week window (25 DSE/ha or approx. 800 DSE grazing days) over the winter period (May/June) producing high quality feed for finishing animals (liveweight gains of 210-300 g/day recorded). Grazing timing is critical to avoid yield penalties and the stock must be removed prior to elongation of the plant to enable normal flowering to occur. Provided grazing is managed and the season allows, the crop can then be harvested with yields ranging between 1.2 t/ha and 2.7t/ha in experimental trials in Southern NSW. For Delegate Station targets for gross income are approx. \$1000-\$1500/ha with a costs of \$362/ha (windrowed, pre-harvest). Canola is susceptible to acid (manganese) and traditionally responds well to surface applied lime. Target soil PH is around 4.8 – 5.0.

The use of dual-purpose crops in a grazing system has numerous benefits including allowing spelling of pasture (while grazing crops), providing a grain income as well as increasing stocking rates, providing a break crop for grass weed control and insect disease, improving soil health (infiltration & structure) for follow-on crops, producing significant bio-mass in the mid-winter feed gap and giving management flexibility.

John Jeffreys explained that with the continuing climatic variability and seasonal uncertainty, he is aiming towards longer season crops (sown early) with less emphasis on waiting for a “spring break”.

Canola has the potential to be integrated into a three-way-system with a cereal (oat, wheat, triticale), forage brassica and pasture rotation.

John Kirkegaard had all the producers ears pricked when he stated there was a possibility of sowing dual purpose canola in late spring/ early summer, to graze it from the new year until lock up in July/August.

The CSIRO trials which will aim to start early in 2010 will look at trialling different canola varieties to determine maturity and sowing patterns and which varieties are best suited to the climatic “sowing windows” of the Southern Monaro region.

The Power of the Farmer Group

Ian G McClelland, A Gartmann, and H van Rees (4th International Crop Science International Conference.)

Farmer groups have made an important contribution to the prosperity of regional towns across Australia. There are two types, those with the specific aim of increasing productivity and those with a broader focus of the welfare of the community as a whole.

There are more than thirty groups in Australia active in taking control of their own destiny. They undertake independent agronomic, economic and community research and provide training and identify future needs. Probably the greatest impact of farm groups has been to focus the efforts of researchers, industry and farmers in one direction. This has led to exchange of ideas, co-operation in solving problems and effective dissemination of new information and innovations.

Farmers are, by definition, isolated one from the other. They work their ground, tend their animals and have in the past operated almost by instinct and on the basis of information handed down from generation to generation. There has existed an innate reluctance to share information, to divulge failures and to admit to successes.

It urges farmers to determine their own destiny, find their own solutions, and make things happen.

It provides information, a forum for discussion and the opportunity for interchange of ideas – not those that are “tried and true,” but those at the forefront of agricultural thinking in Australia and, indeed, the world.

The full text is available @ <http://www.cropscience.org.au>