
Recent events....

❖ Sept 2011– “Building Resilient Family Farms in a Time of Volatility and Change”

25 producers engaged in a lively and interactive day which was co-presented by Rob Napier, Napier Agrifutures, a leading, international communications specialist and Geoff Prior, Lingford Consulting, a productivity specialist from Wodonga.

This was a follow-up day in Nimmitabel to a previous workshop in Bombala in February on the issue of making family farms more resilience and competitive in the face of an increasingly challenging global climate.

Rob Napier (leading communication specialist) reinforced the “take-home” messages ... ie. looking for opportunities to grow your business, having clear goals with flexible strategies and thinking about energy use efficiencies, securing water quality and quantity (“get hold of it, control it, trade it”), precision farming, “targeting your phosphorus applications” and creating a cash rich balance sheet so you can position your business to grab more opportunities.

The day was complemented by Geoff Prior who took participants through a “Myers-Briggs” personality assessment and linked this with different ways farmers make decisions, plan their workloads, manage people and their receptiveness to change within their business.

What was made clear is the over-riding importance of the family unit to any business but especially to a family farm where they often operate as a husband and wife partnership.

Other important messages to come out of the day included the importance of recognizing peoples different personality types and various ways people show leadership, plan, approach problem solving, adapt to change, make decisions and relate to others.



❖ Oct 2011 - Wether trial kicks off at “Knockalong”

The MFS merino genetic comparison trial kicked off on Monday the 17th October at “Knockalong”, Tombong. This trial is hoped to reinvigorate objective measurement of several bloodlines across the Monaro and Yass regions with this being the first wether trial for several years in this area.

24 teams delivered 15 wethers per team to “Knockalong” for the “even-up” shearing. The teams included seven (7) from the Yass, Bookham, Crookwell region, and seventeen (17) teams originating from the Nimmitabel, Bombala, Jindabyne, Cooma, Bungarby, Berridale and Jerangle regions.

The trial runs for three years and measurement data will include fibre diameter, greasy fleece weight, yield, bodyweight, condition / fat score and carcass yield.

Approx. \$3000 of the wool proceeds from the even-up shearing will be donated to the local charity, the Monaro Education Foundation (MEF).

Thanks go to the host of the trial Rowan Wright, all our entrants for donating the wethers, Alan McGufficke for all his time and coordination of the team delivery, Doug Alcock and Phil Graham (NSW DPI) for electronic tagging of the teams and Chris Haylock, local District Vet, for inspecting the teams as they arrived. Also thank you to our sponsors Gordon Litchfield Wool as the main sponsor of the trial and continued support from Jemalong Wool.



***Doug and Phil tagging and recording teams*



****Rowan Wright back lining wethers off-shears**

❖ Oct 2011 - Annual Soil Test Bulk Collection (Soil Club)

The second collection of soil tests across the member base has been initiated with 10 free soil tests being offered this year per membership. Once again, Richard Simpson (CSIRO) will analyse the soil tests on the basis of soil type and link with fertiliser usage, rates & type of fertiliser. Working on the base results from 2010, Richard will be able to start building some very useful and interesting trends and patterns in regards to soil fertility across the Monaro, deficiency patterns and how to really target fertiliser investment.

❖ Soil Club fertiliser trial - MLA Producer Demonstration Sites – set up...

The soil fertility trial's (funded through MLA) on three soil types, basalt, granite and shale have been established. These trials plan to demonstrate the benefits of regular soil testing, interpretation and addressing deficiencies with targeting of the "right type" of fertiliser applications. The result being long-term fertiliser cost savings and improved stocking rates. This trial will also look at pasture production (especially legumes) resulting from different fertilisers and rates and specifically the retention of various "sulphur" based fertilisers in the soil profile.

Thanks go to Incitec, our new sponsor, for donating the product and helping to subsidise soil testing. Also thank you to Luke Pope, Mandy and Ron Horton, Dean Campbell, Bill and Sue Stephens and Jim Haylock for all their help in setting up these trials.



****Bill and Sue Stephens "granite" site, mowing the small test strip plots**



****Jim Haylock, "basalt site", test strip plots**

Dr Richard Simpson's (CSIRO) analysis of MFS member soils in Nov 2010 (107 samples) showed that approx. 50% of topsoils were below optimum in P (phosphorus) on the granite and shale soils and a significant % of topsoils were below optimum in S (sulphur) (67% on the granite and 62% on the basalt).



- ❖ **Evergraze Perennial Pasture Trial's** continue to tick along with pasture assessments being conducted on a regular basis. The Evergraze sites will "officially" finish in June 2012 with a final report and field day to be conducted. The long-term benefits will continue over the longer team with pasture persistence recordings after 3-5 years.



***Trial paddock at "Bellevue", looking at ways to restrain the dominance of phalaris and improve competitiveness of lucerne.*



MFS Seasonal Outlooks / Nov/Dec 2011

Stuart Burge

I have been asked to provide a very brief overview of the seasonal outlook for the near future ie for the period November/ December period using Grassgro modeling.

This request was initially based upon concerns expressed several few weeks ago that "things are

starting to dry out ...". Since that time we have received some useful rain, and understandably therefore these concerns have been alleviated.

Having said that, my travels throughout the Monaro in the last week suggest that many localities, especially to the south (Bombala/Delegate), east (Jerangle/Countegany/Kybyean) and west (Jindabyne/ Eucumbene) are enjoying a (tremendously) good spring.

Jim Shovelton from Mike Stevens and Associates will be providing a more comprehensive overview of the seasonal outlook at the MFS Field Day on 29th November.

Members of MFS will recall that I have stated previously that spring is the most unreliable period to undertake feed budgets here on the Monaro and also to do seasonal tactical runs with Grassgro. The reason quite simply is that it is the most changeable season of the year with considerable variability in temperature, moisture (ie dry today, thunderstorm tomorrow ...), evaporation rates and hence pasture growth rates. Compounding this are the rapidly changing livestock feed demands during this period with both lactating adult animals and their offspring of various ages and sizes. The bottom line then is that it is more difficult to predict what is going to happen into the future during spring.

Nevertheless it is still a worthwhile exercise because it helps to at least consider the management options as we move forward. It is especially helpful with regard to thinking about and planning for such things as livestock selling (ie our lambs), weaning, grain/hay purchase and possibly also opportunistic buying/trading.

At the MFS AGM in September Doug Alcock provided a very comprehensive assessment of this latter option so I will not address that here.

I have undertaken 3 separate analyses. The first two were based on two sites and enterprises with which you will be familiar from previous "runs". These are the Litchfield family's Hazeldean, Cooma and Ned and Anne Kater's "Redcliff" Bombala. Both of these are Merino enterprises. The third analysis is based on a first cross lamb enterprise based on a pasture and soil type comparable to Hazeldean.

*Hazeldean is an old Phalaris / sub clover paddock with considerable Stipa (spear grass / corkscrew) and scattered Poa stocked with 4.5 Merino ewes /

hectare; basalt soil of medium/high fertility; Merino ewes joined to Merino rams lambing 13 August.

*Redcliff is a well fertilised cocksfoot pasture stocked with 4 Merino ewes per hectare. Merino ewes joined to Merino rams lambing 21 August.

*Our third "site" is a first cross lamb operation with Merino ewes joined to Dorset rams lambing 6th August.

Results

Very simply:

- Given the soil moisture conditions and pasture availability this year on 26th October, and based on the historic weather conditions for the past 40 years (ie from 1970 to 2010) Grassgro suggests that for all three farm systems described, and even allowing for the "worst" 10 % of years, lambs will reach 40 kg by the end of December.

A similar such update and more comprehensive overview will be provided and discussed by Jim Shovelton at the **MFS Field Day on 29th Nov 2011**.

Stuart Burge

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Upcoming Events

- ❖ MFS / Seasonal Outlooks for Spring/Summer - **November 29th 2011** – Jim Shovelton (MSA)
- ❖ Soil Test Analysis and Interpretation – Dr Richard Simpson CSIRO, **November 29th 2011**
- ❖ **MFS traineeship program 2012** – two "trainees" to be employed Jan 2012 and rotated across approx. 9 MFS member properties each trainee
- ❖ **ATV, "Stay Upright Training"** will be delivered in Bombala in December 2011 / January 2012 (dates still to be confirmed).

The course runs from 8.30am to 4.00pm at a cost of \$320.00 (GST Inc) per person and covers the following:

- * OH&S responsibilities
- * Personal protective equipment -PPE

- * Pre-Operation ATV Inspection
- * Identification of Controls
- * Machine Control Techniques
- * Starting /Stopping/Reversing
- * Use of 4WD, Gear Ranges, Diff Locks
- * Braking Techniques/Emergency Stop
- * Swerving/Turning
- * Riding over Obstacles
- * Hills (Ascend/Descend/Traversing)
- * Difficult Terrain
- * trailers/attachments/spray equipment
- * Carrying loads and attachments
- * Towing trailers
- * loading/unloading ATVs from vehicles and trailers
- * Environmental Issues
- * Assessment of terrain for ATV suitability

Each participant will be awarded with a Nationally Recognized Statement of Attainment for Unit RTC2306A - Operate Vehicles (ATV) from the Certificate 111 in Conservation and Land Management.

ATV's are a major cause of farm fatalities and serious injury, however, they are an essential vehicle for farm operations.

If you would like to book in ***please contact Toni Smith on 02 6458 7174 or 0429 148 449.***



.....An initiative of Incitec Pivot Fertilisers, ***the Farmer Community*** has been developed in response to a growing need for readily accessible information including new product information, agronomic advice and information about global fertiliser dynamics.

Members of the Farmer Community will have access to a range of information including agronomic information and tips, key nutrient management issues, seasonal news and market conditions, new technologies, trial overviews and a question and answer forum to ask specific soil nutrition questions.

To sign up to the Farmer Community simply visit the Incitec Pivot Fertilisers website and click 'not a member' beneath the community login box and fill out the registration form.

....Incitec Pivot Fertilisers recently also launched community assistance program, **Help a Mate**.

The Help a Mate program provides practical support to rural communities.

The first stage of the program is an online tool kit dealing with the very important issue of rural mental health.

The program is also designed to not only encourage people to seek help themselves but also to provide family and friends access to tools to help when they can see that someone close to them is suffering. See the Incitec Pivot Fertilisers website for more details.



Scholarships on offer.....

Marcus Oldham has three valuable scholarships on offer for 2012 entry into the Farm Business Management course.

We are advising you of these scholarships as you may know someone in your family or district who is considering studying at Marcus next year.

The scholarships are:

- **Australian Farm Management \$10,000**
- **AgVance Liverpool Plains \$10,000**
- **Khancoban Station \$7,500**

The closing date is Tuesday 22 November 2011.

Marcus Oldham scholarships are awarded on a variety of criteria and not all are for academic merit.

Check the website www.marcusoldham.vic.edu.au for the Course Prospectus and scholarship information, or call the Student Services Officer on Free Call 1800 623 500 or email courses@marcusoldham.vic.edu.au

Useful websites

Useful weather sites.....

1. <http://www.yr.no/>
2. http://www.australianweathernews.com/OCF/OCF_070.HTM
3. <http://www.jamstec.go.jp/frsgc/research/d1/iod/>
(Indian Ocean Dipole)

