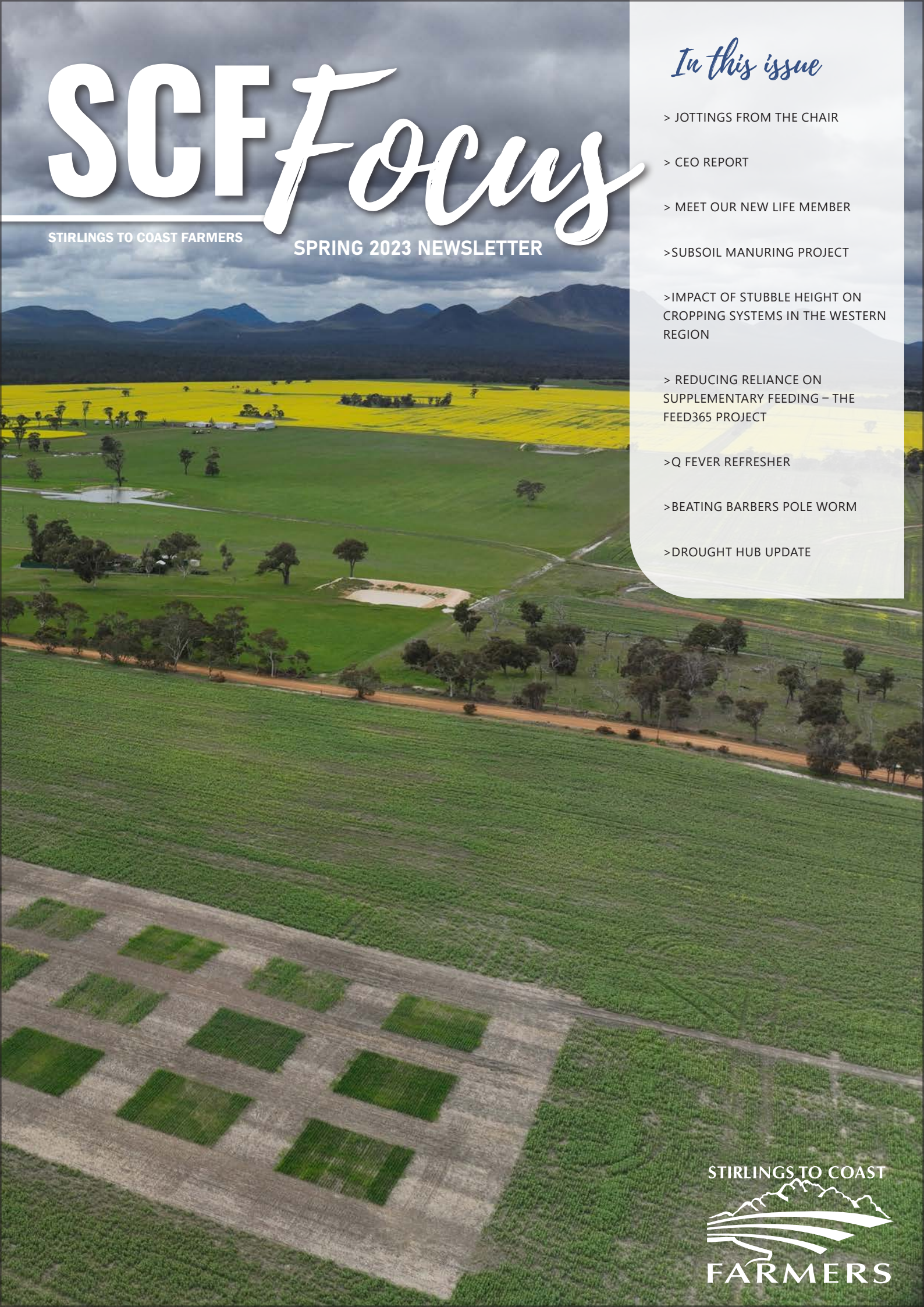
SCF Focus

STIRLINGS TO COAST FARMERS

SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER



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STIRLINGS TO COAST FARMERS

JOTTINGS FROM THE CHAIR

Sandy Forbes, SCF Chair

Hello to all Stirling's to Coast Members, Sponsors and Staff.

Welcome to the Spring Newsletter. The season is generally looking ok in the region though we do need some warm weather and a soft finish for waterlogged crops and to grow some feed. We look forward to spring to warm up! Our thoughts are with farmers in the north who are suffering really dry conditions. Good grain prices are keeping the grain industry buoyant.

Since the winter newsletter we have had the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act revoked in parliament. We are still dealing with the ongoing difficulty in kill space at abattoirs and live export's future. I believe that that the future of the sheep industry is good for those committed to it, and it's just a case (as it always has been) of riding out the highs and lows. The world is always going to demand more red meat and in the short term El Nino conditions affecting mainly the Eastern states will cause another shortfall in the next year or two. The demand for wool and more sustainably produced clothing is gaining traction across the world.

I thank all the SCF staff for their hard work over the growing season with so many projects on board and new funding always being sought. It is always busy at the SCF Office but especially leading up to the Spring Field Days. The Trials Tuesdays are working really well for informal fortnightly get togethers in different parts of our membership area. I also thank all Board Members for their support and guidance, particularly as it has been a very busy time for me in our farm business. Budget time leading up to June 30 was particularly busy and I thank Amy Sims, Taryn and Lizzie for all their hard work in putting together what is a very positive financial outlook for Stirlings to Coast Farmers going forward.

Once again we looked forward to our SCF Spring Field Days, which are a highlight on our calendar. Like last year, we split the days into East and West to give people better opportunity to attend and cut travel time. Both days kicked off at 7.00am with brekky and finished at (roughly!) 1pm with a BBQ lunch. The presentations in the shearing sheds (thanks to Mackie and Drummond Families) first up were very informative with some good take home messages, especially from Owen Catto from Regional Men's Health. It was then onto the buses, where we visited a number of trial sites showcasing SCF research. They were fantastic days out and thanks to all the members and sponsors who were able to attend. It was great to catch up with you all. There are still a number of SCF and local events to come in September and October, check them out on the back of this newsletter or head to scfarmers.org.au/events for more information.

Once again thank you to you our members, our staff, sponsors and Board members who make this group what it is. All the best for the rest of the season!

S.C. Forbes.

Sandy Forbes
Chairman

CEO REPORT

Lizzie von Perger, SCF CEO

Hello SCF Members and Sponsors,

Well, it has been good weather for ducks! But the cold, wet winter has not been that great for crop and pasture growth over winter.

On the bright side, there is definitely more money in mud that than dust, and this definitely hit home to me after a recent conversation with a farmer in NSW. I quickly stopped talking about our issues with waterlogging after he mentioned how dry they had been.

Onto all things SCF!

It has been a busy events season with a good variety of information being presented. The fortnightly SCF Trials Tuesdays have been successful regardless of whether we've had three or fifteen farmers turn up (often in arctic conditions!). These afternoons are very casual and all about checking out local farm trials and tackling seasonal issues. Thanks to those that have supported them.

The Community BBQ days were expanded this year to include a farm business component, including some farm OH&S aspects such as inductions and emergency management planning. Feedback from members who attended was great, so we'll look to continue this next year.

By the time this newsletter goes out, we will have had the SCF Spring Field Days. Again, we've gone with separating the events into Western and Eastern half days. I hope we got the length and topics right – we'd love feedback either way.

Our farm trials are ticking along, and crop growth is starting to speed up as the days get longer. Of note, Dan Fay analysed the nitrogen contribution from the summer grown legumes trial and the faba beans were the front runner, leaving behind almost 250 kg of nitrogen per hectare (above ground biomass!). Pretty exciting preliminary results.

A quick plug for upcoming events. We've got the silage workshops happening on the 25 and 26 September in Denbarker and Many Peaks respectively. One of our members, Victoria Bennett, recently completed the course and highly recommended the workshops to other farmers. We also have our claying efficiency workshops scheduled for the 17 & 18 October in Frankland River and South Stirlings. If you're into claying or thinking about giving it a bash – come along!

Finally, thanks again to all the SCF sponsors, especially CSBP who sponsored the Community BBQ events and allowed us to incorporate farm business. All our sponsor's continued support is very much appreciated by the SCF team and farming members.

Wishing you all a good finish to the season and a smooth transition into harvest.

Best regards,

Lizzie

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meet the new life member

Heather Adams

Region: District of Woogenellup and on the southern boundary of the Stirling Range National Park.

Farm name: Yaralla Farms

Farm size and soil type: 7300 Ha Soil types are very variable but predominantly duplex soils - sandy gravel over clay.

WHAT YEAR DID YOU JOIN STIRLING'S TO COAST FARMERS AND WHY?

Founding members of Stirlings to Coast Farmers in 2009. Helped to organise the first meeting in November 2008 at the Kamballup Hall to gauge interest in forming a local grower group.

WHAT SORT OF ENTERPRISES DO YOU RUN?

Predominantly cropping – continuous cereals/canola rotation. 100% no-till since 1980's using discs.

1500-2000 merino wethers at home, and 100 weaner steers on a small block at Millbrook.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR BIGGEST PASSIONS AND WHY?

Sooo many!

Landcare - I grew up on the boundary of the Porongurup Range National Park and I now live on the boundary of the Stirling Range National Park. Our area is a biodiversity hotspot and unique in the world, and part of the Oyster Harbour Catchment. I am very passionate about the natural environment and have spent all my adult life working on our properties and with other farmers to identify, protect, enhance, and value some of the amazing biodiversity that exists on local farms.

Family Farming – ours is a multi-generational business established for over 100 years, and we acknowledge and celebrate the remarkable sacrifices and achievements made by previous generations. They have provided us with the opportunity to also farm, and now we have paved the way now for the next generation. Dynamic and challenging at times but also very satisfying.

Local sport – loved being involved in junior sports with our children, and we did lots! Now they are all grown up I have stayed involved with the Mt Barker "Bulls" Football Club as a committee member and sponsorship Coordinator.

Strong communities – I have been fortunate over time to have had the capacity to do plenty of community volunteering, and I've found that you always get back so much more than you give. Landcare, schools, sporting groups, fire brigade, farmer groups – I have loved it all.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CONSTRAINTS TO ACHIEVE HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY ON YOUR FARM?

Soil type - our lighter soil types need careful management and have constraints that need to be constantly monitored and managed including pH, non-wetting, compaction, and ability to hold nutrients.

In recent years the constantly rising costs associated with the operation of a farming business.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU DO ON-FARM THAT IS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT TO THE SO CALLED 'NORM' THAT IS INTERESTING?

Probably not!

We place a lot of emphasis on the team culture and looking after our employees. We have two full time employees who have been with us for 23 years and 12 years respectively.

Increased emphasis in recent years on WH&S and training.

Receiving life membership of SCF was a fantastic surprise. It was special to receive recognition for the small part I played in establishing the foundations for what SCF has become today.

A community meeting at Kamballup Hall in November 2008 supported the formation of a grower group, and we established a steering group in February 2009. We started with nothing but were fortunate to have strong support from DAFWA (now DPIRD) and agribusiness.

I would like to thank the members of the founding committee – Ken Drummond (Chair and major driver), Warren Thomas, Shane Greenslade, Mark Adams, Iain Mackie, John Hood, Derek Curwen, Mal Thomson, Scott Smith, Chris Kirkwood, Brad Wood, Michael Cooper, Brent Pritchard (Elders). We were a great team that overcame the many challenges to build something great.

DAFWA researchers worked closely with the group including Wal Anderson, Derk Bakker, Sally Peltzer, Tim Overheu, Svetlana Micic. Special mention must go to Jeremy Lemon and John Blake who both made enormous contributions. I was very privileged to work closely with them both and I can't thank them enough for their friendship and support.

Now we see the next generation coming through and it is more important than ever that farmers work together and support one another. SCF will have a role for many years to come.

Thank you everyone.

WHAT TECHNOLOGIES ARE YOU USING ON-FARM? HOW HAS IT SHAPED YOUR FARM?

We place a high priority on the adoption of the latest technologies to improve our efficiency and productivity and have often been the early adopters (sometimes good and sometimes not!). Yield mapping, guidance systems, satellite data, GPS and mapping, weather stations, connectivity, apps for record keeping, managing employees, maintenance, farm safety etc.

ARE YOU CURRENTLY TRIALLING ANYTHING YOURSELF?

Always doing a range of simple paddock trials to look at different product rates, varieties, time of sowing, soil amelioration, application times and methods in the cropping system across different soil types.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO TEST/TRIAL IN THE NEXT 2 YEARS?

We will look more closely at deep ripping and subsoil constraints as well as continuing to trial different fertiliser strategies.

After viewing the SCF summer legume trial on our property this year we may also look at trialling vetch or another legume on a larger scale so utilise some of the excess soil moisture from this season.

With increasing herbicide resistance challenges we are always trialling new herbicides and methods of weed control to see how we can improve the sustainability of our system.

Trialling a robotic weed seeker, camera sprayer or weed chipper would be interesting to see if they could have a role to play with managing resistance.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE NEXT BIG THING IN AGRICULTURE WILL BE IN 5 TO 10 YEARS?

Learning how to understand, calculate and manage greenhouse gas emissions on farm, to meet the requirements of our export markets and of course also to save the planet!

Managing the increasing obligations with compliance eg food safety, animal welfare, biosecurity, WH&S.

Reducing our dependence on fossil fuels.

Autonomous vehicles/robots and a rapid uptake in new technologies in all areas of crop and livestock management to drive efficiencies.

Continued improvements through breeding/GM technologies in crop varieties and livestock.

DO YOU ATTEND ANY AGRICULTURE FIELD DAYS OTHER THAN SCF?

Machinery Field Days – Dowerin, Newdegate

Oyster Harbour Catchment Group - nutrient management, waterways protection.

Sub-Soil Manuring Project

Dan Fay, Research & Development Co-ordinator, SCF

BACKGROUND

With investment from the Australian Government through the 'National Landcare Program', Stirlings to Coast Farmers has been exploring the use of organic material amendments to ameliorate the poorly structured sub soils of the sandy duplex soils typical to the Albany Port Zone (APZ). Sub soil manuring has been successfully implemented on dense, dispersive, and sometimes sodic clay sub soils in the eastern states, whereby an organically rich amendment is placed deep within the soil profile which alters and improves the soil structure by increasing soil porosity and water holding capacity.

Where subsoil manuring has been successful, it encourages extra root development as the roots follow the rip lines down to where the amendment is placed due to the roots seeking out the banded nutrition. The hypothesised co-benefit is that the increased biological activity associated with the breakdown of the manure will lead to an increase in soil structure in the hard packed clay layers.

METHODOLOGY

The SCF trial site, located in Green Range, utilised a locally manufactured organic manure product known as bio-sludge - Alberts Soil Conditioner. Clay was also included in the trial to create two soil amelioration treatments – bio-sludge with and without clay. The soil type at Green Tange is a deep sandy duplex, with sand over gravely clay. The depth of the compaction layer ranges from 55 to 65cm.

The bio-sludge was surface applied at 20t/ha and worked into the soil profile via a deep ripper. It was applied with and without clay to assess if there would be any increased benefit from adding clay, and how the bio-sludge would compare to claying alone as a soil amelioration method. Crops sown in the trial paddock each season have been:

2021 – Barley

2022 – Wheat

2023 – Pasture

RESULTS

The SCF trial has shown limited crop yield response over the last two seasons, largely due to two key factors.

The bio-sludge amendment with deep ripping is supposed to allow for deeper rooting depth and increased water and nutrient availability. However, ample plant available water throughout the 2021 and 2022 growing seasons meant that it was hard to observe any crop production benefits due to potential changes in sub-soil structure.

The second factor that has influenced the results, is the depth to which the amendment could be placed. Where subsoil manuring has proven to be successful at other locations, the amendment is placed in rip lines to a depth that is at or below the sodic/dispersive clay layer. This results in the enriched manure product (bio-sludge in this case) breaking down this layer over time, increasing microporosity, rooting depth and plant available water. However, within this trial the depth of the hard packed clay layer (non-sodic) was below the depth of incorporation of the enriched manure product due to equipment constraints.

Australian Government | National Landcare Program

DEPTH TO COMPACTION LAYER

Within the trial site, there has been no observable change in depth to the compaction layer (hard packed clay layer) in the treated plots. The depth to which the amendment was placed, along with the technique of broadcasting the manure on the surface and working it into the soil with a deep ripper with inclusion plates, resulted in an uneven incorporation of the manure product. A final round of compaction testing will be completed prior to the completion of the project to determine if the manuring product has had any later effect on soil strength at depth.

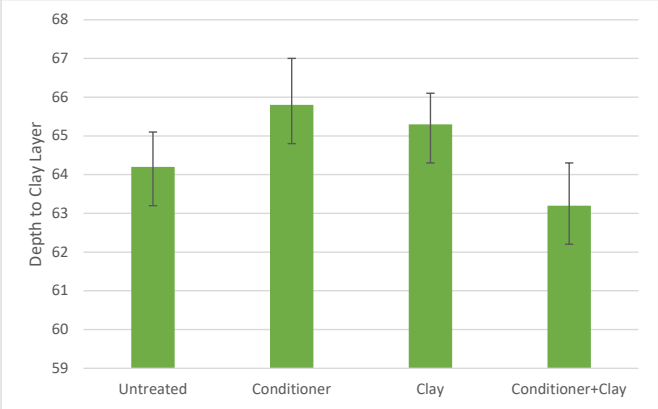


Figure 1. Depth to hard packed clay layer in each of the soil amelioration treatments at Green Range.

VOLUMETRIC WATER CONTENT AT DEPTH

Soil volumetric water content was taken with a TDR probe at a depth of 30 – 43cm, at the end of the 2022/3 summer fallow period. The clay and clay plus bio-sludge treatments resulted in a more plant available water at depth than the untreated control. However, the bio-sludge only treatment performed similarly to the untreated control. In this case, it is unlikely the addition of bio-sludge has increased plant available water at depth.

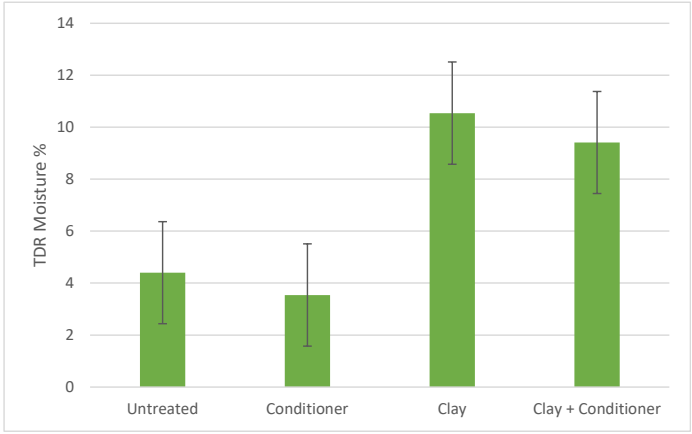
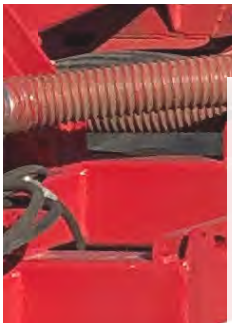


Figure 2. Soil moisture content at depth in each of the amelioration treatments at Green Range.

CONCLUSIONS

While there has apparently been no change to subsoil structure and compaction as a result of the addition of sub-soil manuring, there is potential for the product to increase biological activity and overall soil health. Soil samples taken at depth are currently being assessed for biological population and activity. An increase in soil biological activity is not guaranteed to increase productivity, but it is important for overall soil health and could lead to long term benefits to the farming system. More research is required to quantify these benefits for farmers over the long term.



Impact of stubble height on cropping systems in the Western Region

Sheridan Kowald, Project Officer, & Dan Fay, Research & Development Co-ordinator, SCF

BACKGROUND:

This trial, which is being led by the Liebe Group with investment from GRDC, takes an extensive look at different stubble management and stubble architectures and how they interact with a wide range of variables, to provide growers with a comprehensive insight into how to best optimise stubble management systems for improved productivity in the following crop.

METHODOLOGY/TREATMENTS:

Four different stubble architecture treatments:

- Stripper front + disc seeder (strip & disc)
- Stripper front + speed tiller + disc seeder (strip & disc with tillage)
- Draper front high cut + disc seeder (draper-high & disc)
- Draper front standard cut + tyne seeder (Draper & tyne – standard practice)

Crops planted in the trial paddock;

2021 – Barley

2022 – Canola (all harvest treatments were conducted with a draper front, at a standard cut height)

2023 – Kinsei wheat

RESULTS

Stubble loads

Seeding canola into high stubble loads on a paddock with a history of non-wetting posed a significant issue. The 2021 barley crop produced an average yield of 7.4t/ha across the plotted area, which resulted in an extremely high stubble load at the time of seeding the 2022 canola crop (Figure 1).

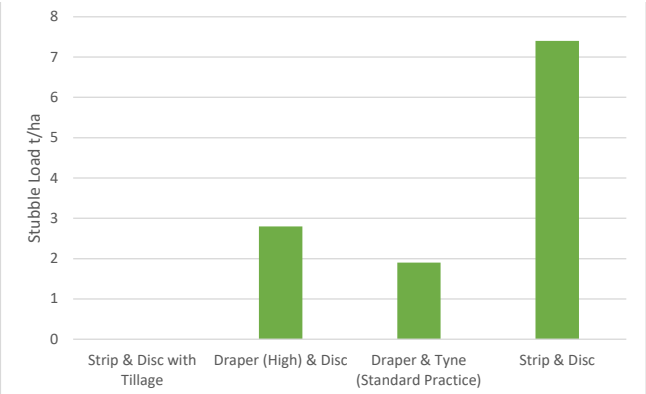


Figure 1. Stubble load at the time of seeding for each stubble treatment in 2022.

2022 Yield Data

The yield results showed that the plots that had previously been harvested with a stripper front performed better than those that had been harvested with a draper front, despite the poor plant establishment in the plots where the heavy residue impacted plant establishment (canola was able to compensate).

The strip and disc treatment produced a canola yield of 3.14t/ha , while the strip/disc with tillage resulted in a canola

yield of 3.42t/ha, slightly higher due to the good initial plant establishment and even plant growth development within the tilled plots (Figure 2). Both plots seeded on the 2021 draper cut stubble performed worse than those on the 2021 stripper front stubble. The standard practice control, which utilised draper front cut at approximately 12cm and tyned seeder, was the worst performing plot treatment. However, it should be noted that the tyned seeder was borrowed from a neighbour, and due to time constraints was not set up to properly interrow sow between the existing narrow row spacings (6.6 inch). As a result, there was a lot of hair pinning and bulldozing of residue in these plots.

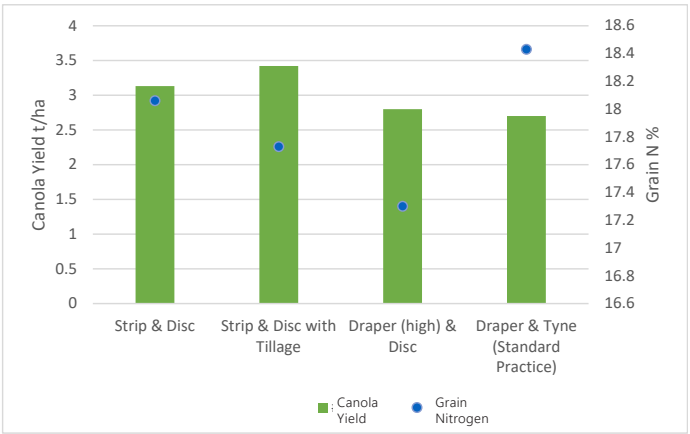


Figure 2. Canola yield and grain nitrogen for each of the stubble treatments in 2022.

2023

At seeding of the wheat in 2023, there were still high amounts of stubble residue from the 2021 barley crop where the stripper front treatments had been applied. This residue, in addition to the narrow row spacings in the crop, made seeding difficult and there was staggered and uneven germination in these plots. It appeared that the high levels of surface residue may have also exacerbated the non-wetting issues on the forest gravel soils.

Although the stubble treatment was uniform across all plots in 2022/3 rotating out of the canola phase, the 2021 stubble treatments still impacted on plant establishment. The strip and disc treatment resulted in 15-20 less plants per m2 than the other stubble treatments (Figure 3).

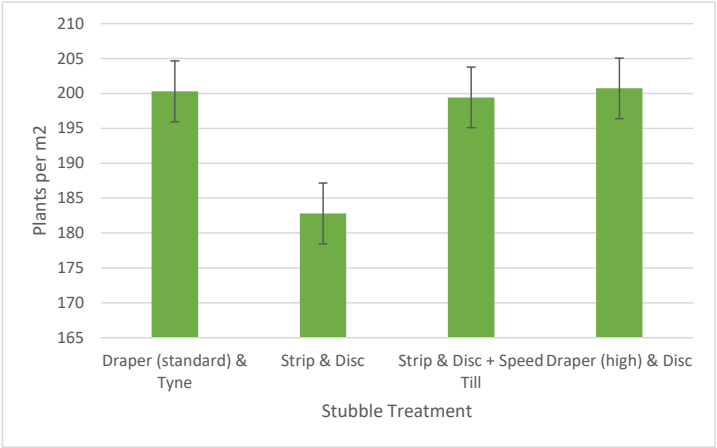


Figure 3. Plant establishment counts for each of the stubble treatments in 2023.

This impact on plant establishment may result in yield loss come the end of the season. Additionally, the slow break down of the high cereal residue loads from 2021, will result in increased disease pressure. Stubble is a major vector for disease in the high rainfall zone, where mildew, blotches and scold can be carried on stubble over the fallow period. In a system where stubble is retained, a diverse crop rotation is the best management for disease pressure. However, if high stubble loads resulting from a strip and disc system are likely to be present for 2 or 3 years post-harvest, this presents a unique challenge, where disease loading could be present in the paddock for a number of years post that crop. This could not only impact the paddock in which a strip and disc system has been utilised but also those adjacent. Although we have not observed an increase in disease presence this season in the Kinsei wheat, it will be interesting to observe the disease loading when the paddock rotates back into barley in 2024.

In addition to the stubble measurements, spray efficacy, disease, crop productivity and canopy temperature have all been recorded this season. These measurements will hopefully provide greater insight into how the stubble management strategies drive crop canopy environmental conditions that impact disease, and whether stubble management can also influence frost prevalence.

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Reducing Reliance on Supplementary Feeding – The FEED365 Project

Sheridan Kowald, Project Officer, SCF

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Feed365 is part of a portfolio of WA-based projects established under the SheepLinks Program – co-funded by Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) to support the WA sheep industry.

The project is investigating livestock forage systems for grazing all-year-round in Mediterranean environments - environments that are being challenged by climate change with increasingly hotter, drier, and more variable seasons. The goal is to create innovative, resilient, low-risk systems, allowing growers to maintain or increase livestock returns with minimal supplementary feeding, in the face of a variable and drying climate.

STIRLINGS TO COAST INVOLVEMENT – TRIAL ONE

Stirlings to Coast Farmers became involved in the project in February 2023. The Slade family in Mount Barker volunteered to be the first cab off the rank, by comparing lamb growth in autumn on winter canola sown in the previous spring 2022 (as is standard practice) against a winter canola/Maximus barley mix. The barley was over-sown into the canola in early autumn 2023.

The SCF team took pasture cuts for biomass assessment and nutritive value analysis (Feed Test) on the 30 May 2023, just before the paddocks were grazed. The Slade family then weighed and condition scored the two separate mobs of lambs before going in and then coming out of both the winter canola only, and the winter canola/Maximus paddocks.

THE RESULTS

The Canola and Maximus Barley treatment had more biomass (1.375 t/ha) than the control of canola only (0.863 t/ha) prior to grazing. Given the dry May, it took some time for the canola to kick off.

Lamb live weight gain was significantly higher in the paddock containing the mix of canola and barley compared to canola alone (Figure 1).

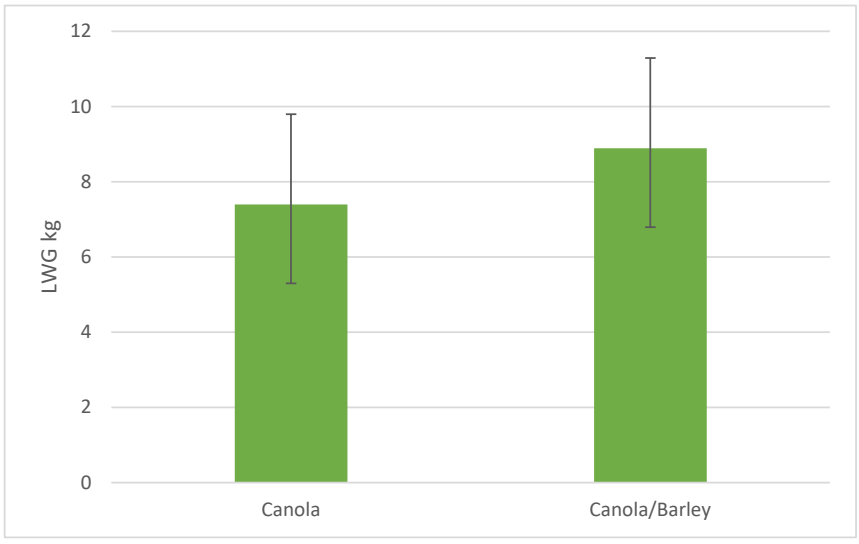

Figure 1 - Site one, Mt Barker - Live weight gain vs treatment

Given there was ample feed available in both scenarios throughout the whole grazing period, it is likely that the addition of the barley was driving the nutritional benefit. The nutrient value analysis (Table 1) shows that the main differences between the two feed sources were crude protein and fibre. The addition of the barley resulted in a better balance of protein and fibre in the feed source, a factor that was likely the driver of the increased productivity on the lambs.

Table 1 - Site one, Mt Barker - Nutritive Value Analysis

Determinant	Control: Canola	Variable: Canola + Maximus
Dry Matter	16.5%	15.9%
Moisture	83.5%	84.1%
Crude Protein	26.0% of dry matter	18.5% of dry matter
Acid Detergent Fibre	12.3% of dry matter	13.3% of dry matter
Neutral Detergent Fibre	19.9% of dry matter	22.7% of dry matter
Digestibility (DMD)	88.9% of dry matter	87.7% of dry matter
Digestibility (DOMD)(Calculated)	82.1% of dry matter	81.1% of dry matter
Est. Metabolised Energy (Calculated)	13.7MJ/kg DM	13.5MJ/kg DM
Fat	6.0% of dry matter	5.8% of dry matter
Ash	11.8% of dry matter	11.6% of dry matter

TRIAL TWO – SHAPING UP

Site two for 2023, hosted by Kim Lester, is located in Green Range, and was sown on the 31 August 2023. For this trial, one 40 ha paddock has been divided and sown with two different 20 ha treatments. The neighbouring 40 ha paddock will be the control.

Treatment one (20 ha) has been sown with:

- ryegrass at 20kg/ha,
- chicory at 1kg/ha
- red clover at 8kg/ha.

Treatment two (20 ha) has been sown with:

- ryegrass at 20kg/ha
- chicory at 1kg/ha
- strawberry clover at 4kg/ha
- white clover at 1kg/ha.

The control paddock (40 ha) treatment is an annual pasture mix of ryegrass and Balansa clover which was over-sown with Illabo wheat on the 24th of April 2023.

The SCF team and Kim Lester will measure biomass production, nutritive value, condition scores and live weight gain for each treatment. A 'Trials Tuesday' is planned for the 26 September at this site – keep a look out.

GOING FORWARD

SCF will be looking for two host farmers in 2024 and again in 2025 to be part of the project. If you are keen on giving something different a go in terms of pasture management to reduce supplementary feeding, we are keen to help you measure the results! Touch base with Sheridan Kowald – 0455 581 729.

Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

mla
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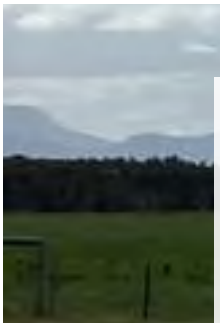


Optimising Pasture Management

Philip Honey, Smart Farms Co-ordinator, SCF

PROJECT AIMS:

To increase the skills & knowledge of landholders, researchers & local NRM officers in the use of effective and practical digital tools that can help monitor and improve our land resources through active management of groundcover.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Training workshops and Best Practice Pasture Management workshop have been established across three farms in Mt Barker & Albany's high rainfall zones in southern WA. The project utilises a range of modern tools and technologies that will remove the barrier to best practice management, allowing landholders to sustainably build pasture productivity, carrying capacity & limit soil degradation. Some of the technologies implemented at these sites will include drone imagery, satellite & vehicle-based camera data and hyper-local weather stations.

The project has delivered a comprehensive extension program that provided NRM outcomes for land improvement and increased sustainability with a strong focus on technologies that help improve groundcover management.

PROJECT BACKGROUND:

Climate change presents a real threat to farming operations, particularly as seasonal conditions continue to change year on year. Rainfall variability, frosts & changes in temperature all play a significant part in the development and maintenance of groundcover. Effective ground cover management protects our soils against erosion, rain impact, and compaction and is an essential contributor to soil biology and soil chemistry, herbicide effectiveness, and overall soil condition.

With a varying climate, landholders need help to adapt their livestock and cropping management to limit their effect on the land whilst trying to optimise their production systems to remain sustainable into the future. Successful adaptation to climate change will need strategic preparation and tactical responses from landholders to ensure that farming remains sustainable and pasture production remains synergistic with animal production.

Current ground cover measurements assess pasture availability by eye based on the farmer's experience. Many landholders find it difficult to accurately determine feed availability and extrapolate measurements to define a whole paddock's livestock carrying capacity. The adoption of digital technologies will provide landholders with the ability to monitor their land more effectively and the opportunity to monitor changes and trends over time through spatial analysis. Low-cost technologies are easily adaptable into farming enterprises where landholders can utilise monitoring, analysis & learning within their decision-making process to understand the impacts on groundcover production better.

A better understanding of ground cover variation across paddocks means that landholders can implement better animal grazing & regenerative techniques to ensure that biodiversity continues to thrive. Better ground cover management will improve the sustainably of animal production both on & off-farm.

TOOLS & TECHNOLOGIES AVAILABLE:

There is a wide range of tools and technologies available to help increase farmers awareness of pasture levels across a paddock, often with many available to use in conjunction with farm weather-stations & soil moisture probes for improved forward planning. These include options & examples such as:

- Ground based sensor measurements – these take measurements via direct contact (such as pasture measurement discs),

- Remotely sensed measurements – measure pasture density, quality and/or health from a distance (non-contact), such as vehicle-based sensor, drone, plane or satellite.

- Simulation based measurements – these utilise algorithms and calculations to predict and simulate a result based on a range of user inputted information (including soil type, rainfall, climate information).

Examples of digital tools currently available for pasture assessment/monitoring include:

PASTURES FROM SPACE

Pastures From Space allows farmers to track Pasture Growth Rates (PGR) and Food On Offer (FOO) weekly over their property using satellite technology. Users can see FOOD & PGR rates in 6.25ha pixels, whilst the graph component allows farmers to turn on/off individual years, to get a better understanding of seasonal changes.

AUSTRALIAN FEEDBASE MONITOR (IN CONJUNCTION WITH CIBOLABS)

The Australian Feedbase Monitor tool is a relatively new grazing management tool that gives farmers insights into their feed capabilities. It uses higher-resolution satellite imagery and calibrated measurement points to generate percentage groundcover and total standing dry matter. This platform is free of charge for MLA members.

GREENSEEKER NDVI

Either hand-held or vehicle mounted, GreenSeeker systems measure plant NDVI levels to indicate overall plant health. Being an active sensor, these systems can be utilised day or night, but require complex calculations & measurement to return a food-on-offer value.

DRONE IMAGERY

Either through RGB and/or NDVI based imagery collected via drone and simple software such as Drone Deploy, Pix4D or Metashape, farmers have the ability to directly map and monitor their individual paddocks and measure plant health across the landscape. These systems typically allow timebased comparisons (comparing two different timeframes) to enable identification of areas impacted or of substantial growth.

FARMINGFORECASTER – GRAZPLAN

Utilising a web-based (Farming Forecaster) or computer software-based version (GrazPlan) users can simulate & predict future pasture growth rates based off historic rainfall information, enterprise types and soil information, stocking rates and effects of supplementary feeding systems in

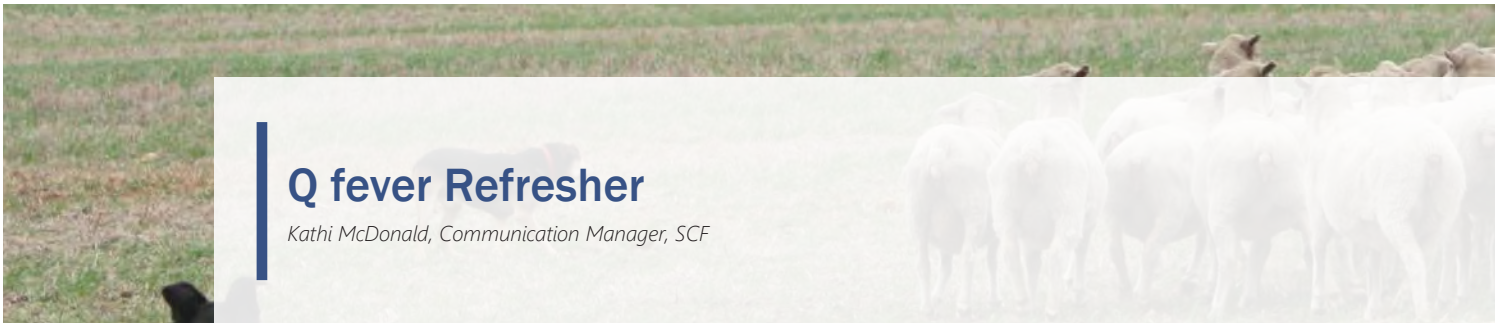
RESOURCES AVAILABLE:

For more information regarding the tools and technologies available, please visit the Stirlings to Coast Farmers projects webpage via www.scfarmers.org.au/pasture-optimization

PROJECT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

This program is jointly funded through Australian Government's National Landcare Programme (Smart Farms Small Grants Round 4) and Stirlings to Coast Farmers.

Australian Government | National Landcare Program



Q fever Refresher

Kathi McDonald, Communication Manager, SCF

KEY POINTS

- Q fever is a bacterial disease that can spread to humans from animals, mainly cattle, sheep and goats.
- It mainly affects people who work with livestock.
- Symptoms are similar to the flu.
- Q fever can be treated with antibiotics.
- There is a safe and effective vaccine available, which is recommended for anyone who is at risk.

WHAT IS Q FEVER?

Q fever is a bacterial infection caused by Coxiella burnetii. It spreads to humans from animals, mainly cattle, sheep and goats. The bacteria are found in many other animals including dogs, cats, horses, pigs, feral rodents, bandicoots, kangaroos, birds and ticks. Infected animals often have no symptoms. In Western Australia, there are typically less than 10 cases notified each year. Most cases are either farmers or abattoir workers.

HOW DO YOU GET IT?

You can get Q fever by breathing in aerosols, soil or dust contaminated with bacteria from urine, milk, faeces (droppings) or birth products of infected animals. It is also possible to get Q fever by drinking unpasteurised milk from an infected animal or by inhaling dust from wool, hides (animal skins) or straw that has been infected with the bacteria. The bacteria can survive in soil and dust for many years and can be spread over several kilometres by the wind. Person-to-person spread is rare.

WHO IS AT RISK?

Anyone who works with livestock is at risk, including farmers, farm employees, graziers, shearers, livestock transporters and abattoir workers. Other people at risk include those with direct contact with animals, including veterinarians, dog/cat breeders, wildlife carers and people living on hobby farms. People who live near livestock or occasionally visit farm environments could also be at risk.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Many people have no or few symptoms. People who do become sick often have a severe flu-like illness. Symptoms begin 2 to 3 weeks after coming into contact with the bacteria and can include:

- high fever and chills
- severe night sweats
- severe headaches, often behind the eyes
- muscle and joint pain
- extreme fatigue
- weight loss

People may also develop inflammation of the liver (hepatitis), infection of the lungs (pneumonia), or infection of the heart valve (endocarditis) during the course of illness. Without treatment, symptoms can last from 2 to 6 weeks. Some people can also develop chronic fatigue which can last for years.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE Q FEVER?

Your doctor can diagnose Q fever based on symptoms, clinical examination and blood tests.

TREATMENT OF Q FEVER

If given soon after illness has begun, appropriate antibiotics can reduce the time for which people have Q fever and reduce the risk of long-term complications. It is important to seek early medical attention if you develop symptoms of Q fever and are at risk of infection. Q fever is usually an acute (short-term) infection, but sometimes it can lead to chronic (long-term) illness. Most people make a full recovery and become immune to repeat infections.

HOW CAN Q FEVER BE PREVENTED?

A safe and effective Q fever vaccine (Q-Vax) is available to protect people against the disease. Vaccination is recommended for adolescents aged over 15 years and adults who work in a high-risk occupation, or for those at risk of environmental exposure. The Australian Q fever Register (www.qfever.org) has a list of doctors specifically trained to deliver Q fever vaccinations.

Apart from vaccination, you can do the following to reduce your risk:

- Wash hands and arms thoroughly in soapy water after any contact with animals or animal products.
- Wear a mask and gloves when handling and disposing of

animal products, waste, placentas and aborted foetuses.

- Any clothing contaminated with animal products should be bagged and washed separately only by those immune to Q fever.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE

Q fever is a notifiable disease. Laboratories and doctors must inform the Department of Health of a diagnosis, including suspected or confirmed cases. Notification is confidential. Department of Health staff investigate each case to determine the likely source of infection, identify other people at risk of infection and ensure control measures are in place. They will also let other people at risk know about immunisation and if they are required to stay away from work.

MORE INFORMATION

Australian Q fever register helpline on 1300 733 837

WorkSafe Western Australia - http://www.dmirs.wa.gov.au/worksafe

Where to get help If you are unwell:

- See a GP and let them know you are concerned about Q fever.
- Ring healthdirect Australia on 1800 022 222.
- Attend a hospital emergency department for urgent medical attention or if you are severely unwell.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Phone the Australian Q fever register helpline on 1300 733 837 or phone your local public health unit.

Information in this article has been sourced from https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/~/media/Files/HealthyWA/New/Q-fever-factsheet.pdf

SCF Farm Business Workshops & Community BBQs – what we learnt!

SCF once again held our Community BBQs and post-seeding field walks, this year with an added Farm Business Workshop at each location. For 2023, our Western day was based around Frankland River and the Eastern day around Green Range. A big thank you to CSBP who generously supported the Sundowner BBQs as part of their 100-year celebrations.

Attendees to the Farm Business Workshops enjoyed presentations and practical sessions on vet-chem safety, farm inductions, farm emergency planning, the importance of reviewing farm insurance and an explanation of tax calculations in the aftermath of temporary full expensing. Thanks to the SCF supporters and sponsors who delivered this content – Farm Life Fitness, ProcessWorx, Achmea Insurance and Smith Thornton Accountants. Some important points were brought up, particularly regarding Farm Inductions and Farm Emergency Planning (see breakout boxes for a recap)!

The Western Field walk, we enjoyed rain, some freezing temperatures, a little sun and some lovely rainbows while out in the paddock looking at the sub-surface drainage trial and the main season cereals NVT in Perillup.

On the Eastern day, we looked at the Bradshaw's cattle enjoying the loose lick in the Opti-weigh cattle weighing system (part of one of our MLA PDS projects), and the main and early season cereal NVTs at South Stirlings.

Both days finished with the CSBP sponsored Community BBQ where everyone enjoyed some great food and drinks while catching up with neighbours and chatting over what the 2023 season was shaping up to look like.

FARM INDUCTIONS

- Farm owners and managers have a duty of care to ensure all employees have the information they need to stay safe.
- Different levels of risk require different inductions.
- Face to face induction (which should also be documented) should cover;
    - o Overview of the farm and introduction to the team
    - o Employee's role and responsibilities explained
    - o Performance expectations explained
    - o Hours of work and breaks explained
    - o Position description explained
    - o Accommodation access provided and rules reviewed
    - o Housing and occupancy agreement reviewed, signed and copy returned to manager (where applicable).
    - o The incident and hazard reporting procedures have been explained.
    - o Emergency management response/plans.
    - o External training (where applicable i.e., confined space, heights, first aid, chem cert);
- Practical training;
    - o Verification of competency (VOC) is required for all tasks before working unsupervised, should be documented (induction forms can be added onto) as training is completed, and includes;
        - -High risk work
        - -Driving
        - -Using PPE
        - -Equipment and plant
        - -Animal handling
        - -Using chemicals
- IMPORTANT - Contractors fall under the definition of a worker. Farmers and managers must provide inductions and a safe working environment.
    - o It's a good idea to start a contractor register and add all your contractor details (including valid insurances) to this.
    - o Send contractors your induction form for completion and save returned forms.
    - o Ensure a Face-to-face contractor induction is completed on arrival, and includes what to do in an emergency.

FARM EMERGENCY PLANNING

It is required that a person conducting a business or running a workplace must ensure that an emergency plan is prepared for the workplace – this includes your farm business! Emergency plans should provide for the following;

- an effective response to an emergency; and
- evacuation procedures; and
- notifying emergency service organisations at the earliest opportunity; and
- medical treatment and assistance; and
- effective communication between the person authorised by the person conducting the business or undertaking to coordinate the emergency response and all persons at the workplace

You should also ensure:

- You practice emergency procedures and this is documented.
- Information, training and instruction is given to relevant workers in relation to implementing the emergency procedures (i.e., through inductions/practice).

Under the Western Australian Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations 2022, fines for not maintaining an emergency management plan for your workplace are:

- For an individual, a fine of $7 000;
- For a body corporate, a fine of $35 000.

Please note, the information in this article is a guide only. For more specific information please reach out to Danielle McNamee from ProcessWorx, who conducted the OHS training as part of both days – processworx.com.au. ProcessWorx are also bronze sponsors of SCF.

BEATING BARBERS POLE WORM

Brown Besier, Veterinary Parasitologist

Barbers Pole worm is always a potential problem for sheep producers in the higher rainfall parts of the state, but serious and widespread outbreaks usually occur in only occasional years. The past months have seen an upsurge in Barbers Pole worm sheep losses, especially along the South Coast, including on properties where it is not a common problem.

Sheep worm control programs mostly focus on the scour worms (especially Brown Stomach and Black Scour worms), which commonly cause visible signs and production loss in sheep. In most years, drenching and pasture management programs that control these, also control Barbers Pole worm, and sheep farmers are often not aware of any particular threat.

However, Barbers Pole worm marches to a different tune from the other worms, and understanding its biology and weaknesses is the basis of effective control measures.

KNOWING THE ENEMY

Barbers Pole worm can kill sheep with no warning

As a blood-sucker and a big egg-producer, Barbers Pole can cause sheep deaths without warning, due to a rapid development of big worm numbers, leading to heavy blood loss. Other sheep will be anaemic, seen as pale eye membranes and gums, and weak – some may go down as driven into the yards for drenching.

The famous sign of "bottle jaw" (fluid in the tissues in the lower part of the body) may or may not be visible – sheep deaths can occur without it. Unlike other worm species, Barbers Pole does not cause scouring or low growth rates (unless scour worms are present at the same time).

Barbers Pole worm needs warm and moist conditions

Warm weather conditions and moisture at ground level (visible green pasture) are essential for development of the Barbers Pole egg and larval stages. This is the basis of predicting whether Barbers Pole outbreaks are likely in a particular year.

In most of WA, good development is usually confined to the autumn and early winter months, and then from late spring to early summer. However, in years with early pasture growth or if pasture persists into summer after a late season's finish, large numbers of Barbers Pole worms can develop. (These conditions also help other worm types as well.)

In higher rainfall areas, where green pasture is present year-round (such as perennial species) or if pasture persists in summer along creek banks or in seepage points, there will always be a background turn-over of Barbers Pole, and the risk to sheep is ever-present.

Some sheep classes at particular risk

Although Barbers Pole worm disease can occur in all sheep classes, those with a low natural immunity to worms are at particular risk. This includes:

- lambs up to about 18 months of age (immunity takes time to develop)

- ewes during lactation (they temporarily lose their worm immunity for about 2 months after lambing, allowing worms numbers to build up).

Sheep in poor nutritional condition are also vulnerable, and ewes below the Lifetime Ewe guidelines for body condition scores are at greater risk.

Better news: Barbers Pole cases are easy to confirm

It's essential to quickly confirm whether Barbers Pole worm is the culprit in sheep deaths, and luckily there are tell-tale signs:

- visual evidence: dead sheep, some survivors with pale membranes and some visibly weak, usually no scouring.

- worms in the gut: Barbers Pole worm live in the 4th stomach and are visible to the eye (red/white, about 2 cm long) – but experience is needed to know if the number is big enough to cause deaths.

- a rapid response to treatment: most drenches quickly kill most Barbers Pole worms.

Extremely high worm egg counts are a give-away for Barbers Pole worm, as it produces far more eggs than other worms. A mob experiencing sheep deaths may have average counts over 5,000 eggs per gram, far higher than for other worm species (where 500 eggs per gram is high).

There are more drench options than for other worms

Drench resistance is very common in the major scour worms, but in WA, it is far less a problem in Barbers Pole worm. (It's a different picture in other states, as a major issue in summer rainfall areas.)

In general, resistance is common only to the old "white drench" (benzimidazole) class, and possibly ivermectin. That leaves several effective short-acting options: levamisole, abamectin and moxidectin, and the combination drench types. In addition, the Barbers Pole worm-specific drench, closantel, provides longer protection, as does the long-acting moxidectin injection.

However, depending on the past drench history, resistance to some of these may have developed on particular properties, and a test to ensure effectiveness is always worthwhile.

TREATMENT FOR A BARBERS POLE WORM PROBLEM

Where there have been sheep deaths or worm egg counts are very high, an immediate drench is essential, with a move out of the particular paddock. Almost any other paddock will have a lower risk of re-infection than where an outbreak has occurred.

However, there is usually no way of assessing the worminess of other paddocks, so the drench used should have a long-acting effect. In winter and spring, significant numbers of other worm species are often present as well, requiring a broadspectrum drench.

Worm egg counts should be monitored from about 5-6 weeks after drenching, until conditions turn dry or cold, and the risk of reinfection is reduced.

PLANNING A PREVENTATIVE PROGRAM

Firstly, the relative Barbers Pole worm risk for the property should be assessed, and the times of year when it is most likely. Where it is only an occasional problem, it is important to identify factors associated with out-of-season outbreaks, so early-warning monitoring can start in good time.

An annual program of routine drenches for all worm types (such as at weaning, and in summer or onto crop stubbles) and pasture management moves should be followed. In many locations, this may be sufficient to keep a lid on Barbers Pole worm, except in years where weather conditions are particularly favourable.

A program of worm egg count monitoring is essential, to check that counts are low (100 eggs per gram or less) in all sheep classes by mid-autumn, and in ewe mobs before lambing commences.

Finally, a check of drench effectiveness is important, not only for Barbers Pole worm. In addition to full drench resistance tests (for several drenches at one time, best in weaner-age lambs), taking worm counts before a drench is given, and then as a paddock sample 2 weeks later (5 weeks for long-acting types), will give a quick indication of whether or not the drench was fully effective.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The WormBoss website (part of the ParaBoss sites: paraboss.com.au) and the DPIRD website (Livestock Parasites) have information on Barbers Pole worm biology and control recommendations, and on drench options and resistance testing.

Drought Hub Update

Stirlings to Coast Farmers, as a 'Drought Hub Node', provides guidance to the Nationally coordinated 'Future Drought Fund' on drought & climate resilience issues for the Albany Region.

WHAT'S NEW

Drought resilience priorities reviewed

Local drought resilience priorities were reviewed during recent meetings of the SW WA Hub's four Regional Advisory Committees (RACs). The committees also discussed FDF-funded projects and identified the 'gaps' for new projects.

The RACs comprise skills-based representatives of agricultural industries for each of four agro-ecological zones covered by the hub and represent the agro-ecological zones Southern Rangelands, Mid West & Gascoyne Coastal, South West and Wheatbelt.

If you have ideas for drought resilience initiatives in the region, contact the SW WA Hub staff, or your local RAC member or Regional Node Lead organisation.

See the SW WA Hub webpages for a list of contacts - https://hub.gga.org.au/

Keep eyes peeled for transformational program

SW WA Hub Consortium Partners are urged to keep their eyes open for an opportunity to drive transformational change of agricultural systems and improve resilience to drought and climate change.

The hub will be in contact with Partners this month seeking Expressions of Interest for project ideas.

Collaborative projects will be encouraged, and end-user involvement will be required in the design and management of projects.

FDF project in-focus – AgTech decoded, growers critically analysing the role of new technology in on-farm decision making

The AgTech decoded project, led by Liebe Group with SCF as partners, is in its final stages. SCF Smart Farms Coordinator, Phil Honey, has been out and about in the past few months presenting the main learnings from the project. In summary;

- Growers are interested in tech that can add value to their business.
- Growers are most interested in technology that is used to make critical management decisions - crop planting, crop nutrition, soil amelioration, weed detection and management.
- Many of the existing technologies do not provide a clear value proposition.
- Better integration & automation is required but it cannot be time consuming.
- Support remains paramount!
- Technology has significantly improved in the last decade, providing a sign of hope that it will continue to develop in the coming years.
- Farmers put great amount of value and trust into these technologies, however there is still a lack of fulfilment from WA farmers.
- Ag tech providers must continue to work closely with researchers and growers to develop tech into useful products.
- Farmers are always willing to try technology.

Have your say on soils research

Are you working with growers, managing land, or have an interest in the future of WA soils?

SW WA Hub Regional Soil Coordinator Jenni Clausen encourages you to represent what you see as missing in soil research, development and extension in your region by completing a national survey.

The funding for the survey is through the Regional Soil Coordinator project, from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) National Landcare Program. It is anonymous, has 24 questions and takes about 20 minutes to complete.

Results will be used to provide a report to the Australian Government on regional priorities for improved soil management in support of the National Soil Strategy and for WA, the WA Soil Health Strategy.

Anyone wanting help, or more information about the survey, is encouraged to contact Ms Clausen via jenni.clausen@murdoch.edu.au or 0419 816 127.

Complete the survey here - https://melbourneuni.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6JSMQiYe7PnF2YK

SCF out&about

SPRING FIELD DAY - MT BARKER

SPRING FIELD DAY - WOOGENELLUP

COMMUNITY BBQS IN JULY

A big thanks to CSBP for dropping off their 100 years of CSBP Esky. It has already been put to good use at both Spring Field Days!

Trial Tuesday - Claying Site

Trial Tuesday - a great turn out at Green Range Country Club to hear Brown Besier presenting on Barbers Pole.

Lizzie, Sandy, Sam and Phil attended the Grower Group Alliance Forum in July with Phil presenting on the AgTech Decoded project.

Trial Tuesday - winter wheat's and feed 365 - with special guest Daisy (Lizzie's Daughter).

A great workshop by Optiweigh to go through some numbers and see it out in action!

Trial Tuesday - checking out the GRDC & GGA acid tolerant rhiozbium trial at Frankland with Mark Seymour.

Together, we're 90 harvests strong.

Congratulations and thank you to everyone who has helped us make it.

When CBH formed 90 years ago, the vision was for WA growers to work together to get their grain to market and strengthen the then struggling wheat industry. Now, we're celebrating 90 harvests, but more than that we are celebrating the longevity and strength of the WA grain industry.

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SUMMIT FERTILIZERS

AGT Barley Varieties for 2023

AGT

Beast$^{\Phi}$

- Very high yielding in low-medium rainfall environments
- Quick maturity, quicker than Compass$^{\Phi}$
- Excellent performance in stressed, tight finishing environments and seasons
- Compass$^{\Phi}$ plant type, with similar early vigour
- Competitive physical grain quality package, with test weight comparable to most grown varieties and excellent grain size resulting in high retentions
- Has entered the Barley Australia malt accreditation program but is currently deliverable as Barley/Feed

Cyclops$^{\Phi}$

- Elite yields
- Quick-mid maturity, slightly slower than Spartacus CL$^{\Phi}$
- Wide adaptation to a range of environments and seasonal conditions
- Erect growing Hindmarsh$^{\Phi}$ plant type
- Less susceptible to lodging than taller varieties such as Compass$^{\Phi}$
- Competitive physical grain quality package
- Improved spot-form net blotch resistance over Rosalind$^{\Phi}$ and Spartacus CL$^{\Phi}$
- Has entered the Barley Australia malt accreditation program but is currently deliverable as Barley/Feed

Minotaur$^{\Phi}$

- A lower risk alternative to RGT Planet$^{\Phi}$ with similar top-end yield potential
- Best suited to medium-high rainfall environments
- Mid-slow maturity, slightly slower than RGT Planet$^{\Phi}$
- Broader adaptation than RGT Planet$^{\Phi}$, delivering more stable yields across a wider range of environmental conditions
- Improved test weight compared with RGT Planet$^{\Phi}$
- Has entered the Barley Australia malt accreditation program but is currently deliverable as Barley/Feed

TitanAX$^{\Phi}$

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- Tolerant to Aggressor® (Group 1) herbicide
- Derived from popular variety Compass$^{\Phi}$
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- Wide adaptation but particularly suited to low-medium rainfall or Mallee type environments
- Agronomically very similar to Compass$^{\Phi}$
- Has entered the Barley Australia malt accreditation program but is currently deliverable as Barley/Feed

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www.agtbreeding.com.au

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In 1969, our trials expanded to all macro-nutrients.

This new and industry-leading research helped make a significant contribution to the knowledge of fertiliser requirements of WA soils.

In collaboration with the CSIRO and Wesfarmers (co-operative), CSBP conducted an exhaustive series of soil fertility experiments in 1969 to gather information on crop responses to all macro-nutrients.

These experiments tested nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K) and sulfur (S) at different rates to better understand their impacts as limiting growth factors.

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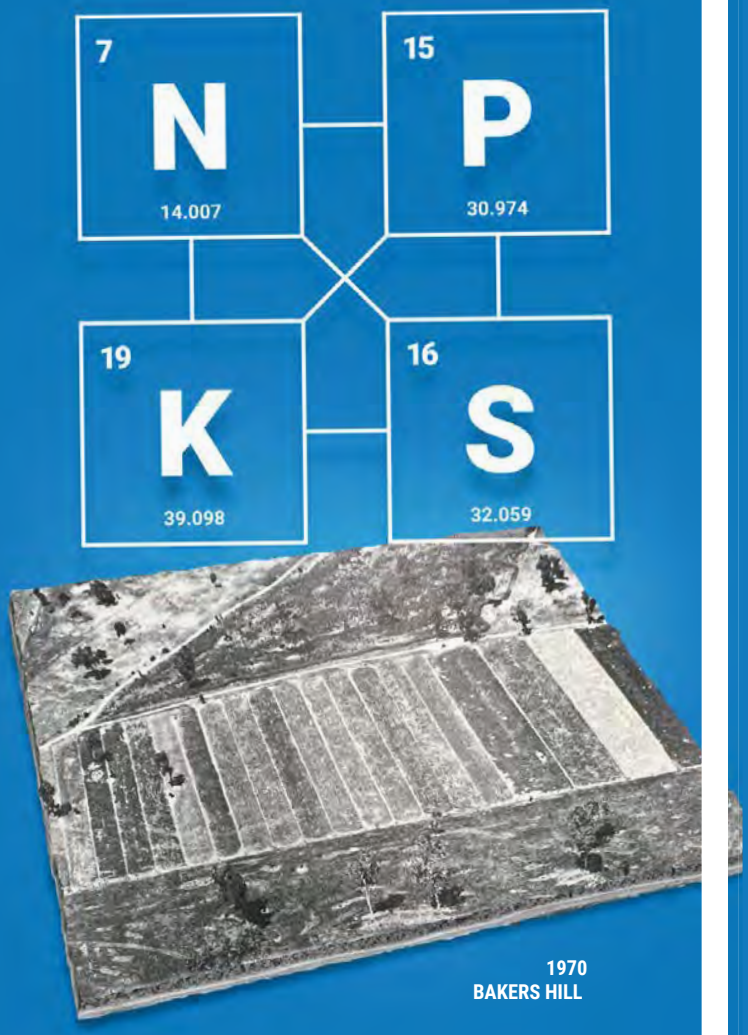

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STAFF, BOARD & COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2023

Stirlings to Coast Farmers could not thrive without the amazing work of our various board and committee members. From SCF members to expert advisors, each one plays a key part in the development and growth of the SCF community.

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The SCF team is based at the SCF office located at 75 Albany Highway (opposite Dome) in Albany.

Staff can be contacted on 9842 6653 or admin@scfarmers.org.au

STIRLINGS TO COAST FARMERS

Community Calendar

19 SEPTEMBER -
FAR WA Field Day
to find out more head to scfarmers.org.au/events

20 SEPTEMBER -
Western Beef Better Hay & Silage Workshop
to find out more head to trybooking.com/CLBEX

21 SEPTEMBER -
Delta Wellstead Spring Field Walk
to find out more head to facebook.com/wellsteadruralservices/

26 SEPTEMBER -
#SCFTrialsTuesday FEED365 (Green Range)
to find out more head to scfarmers.org.au/events

3 OCTOBER -
#SCFTrialsTuesday Late Sown Cereals (Manypeaks)
to find out more head to scfarmers.org.au/events

17-18 OCTOBER -
Claying Efficiency Workshops
(Katanning, Frankland River & South Stirlings)
to find out more head to scfarmers.org.au/events