

western division news letter

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Poor lamb-marking percentages? Let's 'webinar' the topic!

By Allie Jones
Livestock Extension Officer
and Charlotte Cavanagh
Veterinary Officer
NSW DPI Bourke

Staff from the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities (LHPA) received numerous reports of low conception and lamb marking rates during 2011. The reports came from producers who had expected good percentages, given the good seasonal conditions, and were having trouble explaining and understanding the poor results. Similar reports were received from a number of regions across a large part of NSW.

DPI staff considered that a webinar might be a useful tool for discussing the issue of poor conception and lamb-marking rates with producers. A webinar is an interactive seminar

or presentation that is delivered over the Internet and telephone.

Over 60 people participated in two successful webinars held on 13 and 19 December 2011; the first webinar was oversubscribed, so a second one was held the following week.

The aim of the webinar was to:

- introduce producers to the concept of the webinar
- deliver information about potential reproduction issues
- discuss approaches to understanding what has occurred in flocks
- talk over what has been seen in flocks in a number of regions
- discuss what these observations may mean
- decide what needs to be done.

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Landholder Bronwyn Turner participating in her first webinar at the NSW DPI office in Hay. *Photo by Sally Ware*

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Where is the ‘Western Lands Commission’?

By Elizabeth Burke
Property Management
Project Officer
Crown Lands
NSW DPI Dubbo

Following a number of government restructurings and changes, the group of staff that worked within the ‘Western Lands Commission’ are now within the Catchments and Lands Division of the Department of Primary Industries as part of ‘Crown Lands’.

The Catchments and Lands Division consists of the business units of the Crown Lands Division, the Catchment Management Authorities and the Soil Conservation Service of NSW. Ms Renata Brooks is the Deputy Director General Catchments and Lands and reports directly to the Director General of the Department of Primary Industries, Dr Richard Sheldrake.

In the Western Division, Crown Lands continues to be responsible for the management and administration of all lands leased under the provisions of the *Western Lands Act 1901*, together with the management of all lands administered

under the provisions of the Crown Lands Acts, including Crown reserves. This includes licences and leases associated with Crown Lands.

Although the main focus of work for Crown Lands in the Western Division is managing Crown tenures (particularly Western Lands Leases), Crown Lands staff are also responsible for strengthening regional communities, providing access to public assets and maintaining public infrastructure.

If you have any queries about any Crown land in the Western Division, please contact the Dubbo Office on 02 6883 5400 or the Rangeland Management Officers located at Balranald (David Gee 03 5051 6205); Bourke (Anthony Azevedo 02 6872 2144); Broken Hill, (Tiff Brown 08 8082 5203); Cobar (Jacqueline Mills 02 6836 3018); Walgett (Peter Smith 02 6828 0111); Wentworth (Ian Kelly 03 5051 6212); or Wilcannia (Geoff Cullenward 08 8082 5202). ■

Legal Roads Network Project

By Rex Miller and
Maurice Cenzato
Legal Roads Network
Project Team
Crown Lands
NSW DPI Dubbo

The Legal Roads Network Project Team has now drawn up and lodged 41 plans identifying over 8400 km of Shire Roads and 1700 km of restricted easements to landlocked properties in the Western Division.

The Project Team has completed defining on the plans all of the boundaries of roads and easements within Central Darling Shire and 90% of those within Bourke Shire. The Project Team is currently preparing plans for the Kamilaroi Highway between Bourke and Brewarrina; Dry Bogan Rd; Snake Gully Rd; and the Barrier Highway from Barnato east to the Division boundary.

Plans of the Mitchell Highway south of Bourke, Jumps Rd, Arthur Hall VC Way, Doneys Rd, Tubbavilla Rd, Colane Rd and part of Monkey Bridge Rd are also well advanced.

Landholders whose primary property access is via these roads will have received documentation outlining the actions required to ensure the provision of legal access to their properties. Any landholders that have not returned their paperwork to the Crown Lands Division of NSW DPI are requested to do so as soon as possible. This will ensure that any specific individual requirements are fully considered.

The Project Team has begun work within Cobar Shire, and correspondence will shortly be sent to landholders with primary access via Budda, Buckanbe, Tilpilly, Tiltagoona and Mt Gap roads.

Landholders are reminded that the legal access to any Western Lands Lease property needs to be determined before considering transfer. This requirement is particularly important in instances where the subdivision of a property results in the creation of a landlocked holding. Any queries in regard to legal access should be directed to the members of the Legal Roads Network Project Team, Rex Miller (02 6883 5420) or Maurice Cenzato (02 6883 5417).

Landholders are also reminded that applications to create easements to landlocked properties are to be returned by the due date, as noted in correspondence from the Project Team. Lodgement of easement applications when requested enables the Project Team to take all action to create an access easement to landlocked properties at no cost to landholders.

The Project Team thanks the landholders of the Western Division for their ongoing support and the timely return of paperwork so that an effective legal access system can be achieved in the Western Division. ■



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- » Lachlan CMA
- » Lower Murray Darling CMA
- » Western CMA

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Greg Curran (Technical Specialist, Animal Health Western Division), who is based in Broken Hill, delivered a Powerpoint presentation and discussed with participants the many factors that could have contributed to the poor results. Webinar participants were able to see and hear Greg's presentation, which included maps, pictures and summary points, on their computers. Participants were also able to ask questions and make comments.

The webinar enabled concerned stakeholders, who may otherwise have been isolated by distance, to have a valuable and inclusive discussion. Participants (including producers, district veterinarians and advisors from NSW, SA and QLD) contributed ideas about the likely reasons for poor results in their districts. Producers from a number of regions were able to provide detailed accounts of what had been observed in their flocks. The webinar provided an opportunity for producers to communicate and discuss their opinions with Greg and fellow attendees.

The result was a practical and technical discussion that allowed participants to think through what and when things went wrong. Were the losses between conception and birth, or between birth and lambing? Potential causes include poor fertility of ewes and rams; lack of ewe and ram contact because of changes in paddock size/flock size or isolation caused by floodwaters; protein deficits; and reduced fat scores of ewes and rams at key times during the breeding cycle. Other factors were the impacts of heat stress, weather conditions, disease spread and irritation caused by mosquitoes and midges, as well as the huge impact in some areas of predation of newborn lambs.

Although producers may have been hoping for a solution to the problem, this expectation was not shared by the host Allie Jones and presenter Greg Curran. The information gathered established that numerous factors contributed to the lack of lambs on the ground at lamb marking. The scenario often varied between producers and properties.

The feedback from participants in regard to the technology of webinars was very positive: 100% of attendees who filled out their surveys would recommend using the webinar technology to others.

A couple of comments from the producers who joined the webinar are listed below:

- Very well put together and highly relevant, as sheep fertility – particularly for Merinos

– is the Achilles heel of the sheep industry, and now is the most vital time ever to improve it.

- Thank you. As we are not producers yet and intend to get back on the land, it is good to be able to get access to relevant info and producers' experience and ideas. Thank you for the opportunity to attend this webinar.
- Logged on and followed webinar instructions. Very straightforward, found it easy.

NSW DPI staff are optimistic that webinars will offer a practical way of delivering resources and information to producers in western NSW. Recent challenges have seen a decrease in the numbers of producers attending workshops and field days in remote areas; there are many reasons for this, including cost of travel and time constraints. Such changes are forcing extension educators to find new and efficient means to continue providing quality programs. Online technology, such as webinars, is one tool that can be used by extension staff to reach producers and industry representatives.

Having the ability to create, host, and facilitate access to information over the Internet creates many new opportunities for NSW DPI staff and producers. Major advantages of using webinars for online educational programming include affordability, simple technological requirements, ease of access, synchronous communication, interaction, real-time dissemination of information, immediate feedback, ability to reach a geographically dispersed audience and no requirement for travel by participants or presenters. ■

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Land looking good in the Broken Hill District

By Tiff Brown
Rangeland Management
Officer
Crown Lands Division
NSW DPI Broken Hill

As happened last year, 2012 has had a wet start, and the country is looking fantastic. As the exceptional season continues, Tibooburra has received 49 mm and Broken Hill a whopping 160 mm of rain so far, with more predicted in the coming months. This has renewed the green tinge across the district and provided a welcome, albeit very temporary, relief from the threat of bushfire. Although there have been some significant fires this season, the area affected could have been a lot larger if not for the preparedness and tireless efforts of landholders, volunteer fire fighters, the Rural Fire Service and other agencies. As we are all ever aware, the fire season isn't over yet, and though we hope the worst has passed there is plenty of preparation still to do.

As the Range Condition Assessment Program rolls out across the Western Division, information on the condition of pasture in the Broken Hill and Unincorporated Area is being collected. During December I travelled through the district and met with many landholders to undertake Range Condition Assessments on their properties.

The assessments involved taking measurements at six sites on a property and also establishing photo-points, estimating the

amount of vegetation cover on the ground, identifying the species present and whether they were palatable to stock, and making an assessment of overall pasture condition. These measurements help to build an understanding of how pasture changes over time in response to various factors such as rainfall, climate, land use and total grazing pressure. During this exceptional season, the measurements taken will likely represent close-to-optimum conditions.

On the properties I visited there was plenty of feed about, although at that time it was beginning to dry out, except where localised storms had occurred. What struck me the most – and indeed what many landholders spoke of on my visits – was the diversity of plant species present this season. Many people were delighted to see the return of grasses and other species not seen since the 1970s – and some that had not previously been seen at all. Each property visit was very informative, and I would like to thank all of the landholders involved for their help and hospitality. For those I haven't visited yet, I look forward to meeting you on future surveys, which will continue to roll out through 2012 and beyond.



Left: Example of a quadrat, which is used to estimate vegetation cover in 1 m². Right: Example of a rangeland photo-point with overall good vegetation coverage and species diversity. *Photos by Tiff Brown*

Ted Davies completes 22 years' service to the Wild Dog Destruction Board

In November last year, Ted Davies ended his long association and service to the Wild Dog Destruction Board. Ted, formerly of Murtee Station near Wilcannia, has represented the NSW Farmers' Association Western Division Council on the Board since 1989.

At the time Ted joined the Board, Doug Pearson was the Western Lands Commissioner and Chairman of the Board. During the time Ted has served as a Member, he has worked with five different Chairs and numerous Boards and has played an influential role in implementing substantial changes in the management of the Board and maintenance of the wild dog barrier fence.

One of the changes that has occurred over the years is the introduction and improvement of the process of clay-capping sand dunes on the apron adjoining the fence. This process stabilises dunes and helps prevent erosion under the fence or accretion of sand against the fence; it also significantly reduces ongoing maintenance costs for the Board. Ted has contributed greatly in ensuring that the Board has appropriate financial structures in place to meet the programmed costs of fence replacement and maintenance, vehicle and machinery replacement, and staff-related expenses.

Improved fencing techniques are something that the Board pays particular attention to. Trialling new products and equipment has led to significant efficiencies in fence maintenance and replacement. Ted led by example and demonstrated a great capacity and willingness to embrace change and listen to new ideas. This has resulted in substantial savings for the Board, and ultimately for ratepayers.

There has been an improvement in the quality of accommodation for Board employees. At the time Ted joined the Board, staff housing was sub-standard and included only the most basic facilities and services. As a consequence, the Board experienced great difficulty in attracting and retaining staff. Board employees reside alongside the fence in extremely remote locations, and Ted has played a lead role in ensuring that these employees are provided with appropriate standards of accommodation.

Ted's tenure on the Board ended as a result of the expiry of the terms of appointment of all Members on 26 November last year. Ted did not seek reappointment to the Board. A new Board began its term of appointment on 27 November 2011.

The Board is composed of five Members (all of whom must be resident landholders in the Western Division) and the Western Lands Commissioner, who is the Chairperson. The *Wild Dog Destruction Act 1921* specifies the makeup of the Board and further specifies that the primary role of the Board is maintenance of the dog-proof fence.

The current Board structure is as follows:

- **Andrew Bell**, Chairperson
- **Ken Turner**, Boorongie Station via Broken Hill, representing the Pastoralists' Association of West Darling
- **Neill Leigo**, Allundy Station via White Cliffs, representing the Darling Livestock Health and Pest Authority
- **Geoff Davis**, Brindiwilpa Station via Tibooburra, representing the Western Livestock Health and Pest Authority
- **Nick Bonselaar**, Windalle Station via Menindee, representing the Western Livestock Health and Pest Authority
- **Ben Mannix**, Gumbooka Station via Bourke, representing the NSW Farmers' Association Western Division Council. ■

By **Andrew Bell**
Western Lands
Commissioner
Crown Lands Division
NSW DPI Dubbo

Below: Ted Davies and other Board Members inspecting a section of the dog fence. *Photo by Andrew Bell*





Western Landcare Forum

Cobar, 20 - 21 April 2012

9 am 20th - 1 pm 21st April 2012
Cobar Bowling & Golf Club

"new opportunities, new ideas"

Photo: Peter Ellis

Speakers:



Dr Carole Hungerford
Celebrated author of "Good Health in the 21st Century" – which champions a nutrition-based approach to wellness.



Mike Parish
Teacher of applied grazing principles and owner of renowned health food store, Healthy Life



Walter Jehne
Retired scientist with a specialist background in soil microbiology and plant ecology.



Terry McCosker
Cell grazing founder and forward thinking agriculturalist.



Tom Nicholas
Healthy Soils Australia Chair. Supports a wide range of proven approaches to build healthy, carbon rich soil.



Reg Kidd
Reg Kidd has been presenting ABC Central West and Western Plains Gardening Talkback since 1989.

Field trips:

- Osterley Downs machinery modifications
- Etiwanda time controlled grazing
- Coonara water spreading
- Local garden tour with Reg Kidd

Entertainment:

Dinner and 'Elvis spectacular' Vegas-style tribute show with Damian Mullin



Kids activities included on Friday and Saturday mornings

Hosted by the Buckwaroon Catchment Landcare Group

For registration and information contact:
Emma Barton on: 6836 4682 or 0407 362 521 or
Rana Manns on: 6837 3912 or 0428 373 912

LANDCARE
WESTERN LANDCARE NSW

Grass identification workshops to come to Dareton

The very popular 'Recognising Grasses' and 'Identifying Grasses' workshops will come west to Dareton on 12 and 13 April 2012.

Susan Walla, Education Facilitator with the Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority (CMA), has invited the NSW Weeds Training Program to conduct the workshops for the CMA and other interested parties. Staff from other agencies are more than welcome to attend the days at their cost.

Harry Rose is a leading grass expert with NSW DPI and has been conducting these practical, accredited workshops all across NSW.

'Recognising Grasses'

'Recognising Grasses' is a 1-day workshop developed to enable participants to recognise common weedy, native and desirable introduced grasses within an area and understand what these plants may indicate about the environment and management of a site. Participants will develop the skills and knowledge to recognise 12 to 14 grasses using only a few features and will collect useful samples for identification.

Who should come along to the 'Recognising Grasses' Workshop?

This workshop is designed for people who need to collect grasses for identification; recognise the more common or important weedy and desirable grasses in an area; and show other stakeholders how to tell the good from the bad in simple language.

'Identifying Grasses'

'Identifying Grasses' is a 1-day workshop developed to extend participants' knowledge and skills beyond

the basic recognition and collection techniques developed in the Certificate II Recognising Grasses workshop. Participants will develop the skills and knowledge to identify grass species anywhere in NSW by using botanical keys and will then be able to develop a professional-quality reference herbarium.

What's covered in the 'Identifying Grasses' Workshop?

The topics covered are:

- Understanding the grass structures needed for grass identification
- Preparing equipment and resources for grass collecting
- Methods for collecting and handling grass samples
- Records, ethics and permits for collecting
- Making a professional herbarium
- Identifying by grasses using botanical keys.

Who should come along to the 'Identifying Grasses' Workshop?

This course is designed for people who need to identify grasses, develop recognition features for grasses in their local area, and/or create a reference herbarium for themselves, staff or landholders. It would be especially useful for extension staff who wish to be able to identify incursions of harmful species at an early stage.

For more information or to register your interest, contact Susan Walla, Education Facilitator/Media, Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority, 32 Enterprise Way, Buronga, NSW, 2739.

Mob: 0429 035 961, Tel: (03) 5021 9459, email: susan.walla@cma.nsw.gov.au ■

By Annette Tenbroeke
Education Officer
NSW DPI Wagga Wagga

'New Opportunities, New Ideas' Forum for Western Landcarers

On 20 and 21 April the Buckwaroon Landcare group will host the Western Landcare Forum at the Bowling and Golf Club in Cobar. The focus of this year's forum is soil carbon.

'We will hear about all aspects of carbon: how you get it, how you keep it, and what does it do for the health of your soils and the people that eat the food grown in the soils', said Robert Chambers, Chairman of the group.

On the first day of the forum, Walter Jehne, Tom Nicholas and Terry McCosker will talk about how to build healthy, carbon-rich soils. The second day will see talks by Dr Carole Hungerford and Mike Parish looking at human nutrition related to the health of soils.

'The speakers at this year's forum are very knowledgeable' said Stuart Mosely, one of the group members. 'Between them they know everything there is to know about soil carbon in Australia.'

Field trips will be offered to some of the group members' properties. As part of the forum you will be able to visit 'Osterley Downs' to look at machinery conversions; 'Etiwanda' to see time-controlled grazing; or 'Coonara' to look at water-spreading works.

'And we have Elvis too, all the way from Vegas via Melbourne', said Emma Barton, one of the group members. 'I've heard he puts on quite a show.'

The forum includes dinner and entertainment. For more information and to register to attend, please call Rana Manns on 6837 3912 or Emma Barton on 6836 4682. ■

By Anne Holst
Western Landcare NSW Inc.
C/- Western CMA Bourke
Tel: 02 6872 2144
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Western CMA begins Catchment Action Plan review

By Anna Hanson
Western CMA Catchment
Coordinator – Planning
Western CMA

The Western CMA is currently reviewing its Catchment Action Plan (CAP), the framework that guides the work undertaken by the Western CMA.

The Western CMA aims to protect and restore our natural resources by providing opportunities for all sectors of the Western catchment, including landholders, businesses, industry and the community, to participate in sustainable natural resource management (NRM).

The purpose of the Western CAP is to provide a list of agreed objectives for natural resources within the catchment for the next 10 years.

The Western CAP is being upgraded in consultation with the community, relevant organisations and other government departments to provide future strategic direction for NRM actions in the region.

CAP reviews are being undertaken by each of the 13 Catchment Management Authorities in conjunction with their communities. The plans must be reviewed every 5 years, as directed by the NSW Government.

The current Western CAP has served the Western CMA well and has directed 5 years' worth of projects within the catchment. However, times have changed, and the Plan now requires updating to allow for new and

emerging issues to be addressed in the catchment.

The review will provide an opportunity to:

- reflect on the appropriateness and relevance of the targets set within the CAP and revise them where necessary
- incorporate new knowledge, tackle new challenges and opportunities, and improve approaches to NRM
- ensure that the current NRM needs, issues and priorities of the community are reflected in the CAP
- help set future directions for NRM activity and investment in the region.

Western CMA is currently discussing the CAP with the Aboriginal community. Further community-wide consultation to discuss the direction of the Western CAP will be held later this year.

CAP review meetings will be publicised extensively to allow the community to have input into the Plan's review. Keep an eye out on the Western CMA website for more information about the CAP review process and how you can get involved. See www.western.cma.nsw.gov.au ■

Below: Rockly Ford Bridge,
Barwon river, Collarenebri
Photo by Marlene Cutler



New Chair appointed to Lower Murray Darling CMA

The Lower Murray Darling (LMD) CMA has welcomed the appointment by the NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson, of Cheryl Rix as the new Chair of the Board.

By Susan Walla
Education Facilitator/Media
Lower Murray Darling CMA

Mrs Rix brings a breadth of experience to the LMD CMA Board and is well known in the local area, having worked in the irrigation, water and community banking sectors.

'I am thrilled and excited to be appointed Chair of the LMD CMA, and I acknowledge the work that lies ahead with the Catchment Action Plan Review', Mrs Rix said. 'My experience in business and management and as a landholder will be of great benefit.'

'Being raised on a sheep and cattle property and more recently being an active member of the local Sunraysia region as a landholder, community volunteer and business professional has provided me with a broad understanding of the issues facing catchment residents, farmers and irrigators and how we integrate farming and environmental practices to ensure sustainability into the future. The Catchment has a wide variety of natural assets valued by all who live in our region that need to be appropriately cared for, not least the riverine environments which have been given a much greater focus in the draft Murray Darling Basin Plan.'

Below left: Cheryl Rix; Below right: Allison McTaggart. Photos courtesy of LMD CMA



'The LMD CMA has achieved substantial on-ground improvements under the fine leadership of Mark King over the past 8 years and leaves the organisation in good stead. I thank Mark and wish him every success for the future', said Mrs Rix. 'The General Manager, Lesley Palmer, leads a committed team, and I look forward to delivering meaningful projects with positive results.'

'The LMD CMA has a key role to play in natural resource management, supporting landholders in finding a balance between economic drivers and caring for the environment to achieve a sustainable future for the catchment. The CMA team will continue to have productive interactions within the community, delivering positive outcomes, especially in the key activity for this year, being the Catchment Action Plan (CAP) Review that is now under way. All members of the catchment are encouraged to become involved in setting the future direction to ensure a resilient landscape.'

'In December, appointments to the Board were decided by the Minister; I would like to acknowledge departing Board member Howard Jones and thank him for his past endeavours, including being an inaugural member of the board over the past eight years. My congratulations go to Gary Doyle, who was reappointed to the Board, and a warm welcome to Allison McTaggart as the newly appointed Board member. Ms McTaggart will provide a strong skill set with her experience on other Boards and in strategic planning and business management. I also look forward to working closely with the rest of the Board: Patty Byrnes, Barrie MacMillan, Paula Doran and Tom Hynes.'

The LMD CMA remains committed to continuing the partnership between community and government in the management of natural resources across the catchment. Information on the review of the Catchment Action Plan can be found on the LMD CMA website at: www.lmd.cma.nsw.gov.au ■

AusPlots-Rangelands: Benchmarking vegetation and soils

By Cathy Waters
Research Scientist (Pastures
and Rangeland Research)
NSW DPI Trangie

The diversity of Australian rangeland ecosystems and the complex nature of different ecosystem responses to seasonal conditions mean that these ecosystems are often difficult to understand. For pastoralists in the Western Division of NSW, a long history of monitoring programs has not always resulted in clear, tangible outcomes. For agency staff, comparisons with results from other states have been difficult owing to the use of inconsistent methodologies and the fickle nature of funding.

In May 2010, AusPlots-Rangelands was established to provide consistent infrastructure (i.e. plots, data and specimens) and undertake baseline measurements across Australian rangelands. A specially developed sampling methodology will provide a systematic, repeatable and widely accepted monitoring method for each plot in each state or territory. The composition of vegetation and its structure and cover, along with soil characteristics (including soil organic carbon content), will be measured. The vegetation assessment will be comprehensive, with identification of all perennial species from herbarium specimens and DNA barcoding. This information will be

made available to participating landholders and agencies in western NSW. It will identify which vegetation components are subject to change, provide a basis for comparing management practices, and provide a common baseline for assessing change. This will make it easier to understand the magnitude of change, the responses to disturbance, and long-term environmental changes such as climate.

Monitoring will be done through the establishment of 1000 permanent biodiversity monitoring plots throughout Australia, of which about 100 will be established in western NSW over the next 18 months. The majority of these sites are planned in such a way as to build on existing survey and monitoring sites; in this way the project will be integrated with current or historical sites so as to value-add to both, rather than having to rebuild a new network of sites. AusPlots-Rangelands is a collaboration between DPI, the Office of Environment and Heritage, the Western CMA and the University of Adelaide.

For further details contact Cathy Waters, phone 02 6880 8037; cathy.waters@dpi.nsw.gov.au ■

Use a National Sheep Health Statement or pay the price!

By Colin Peake
District Veterinary Officer
Riverina LHPA Hay

When sending sheep to a store sale or selling them privately, all producers *must provide a National Sheep Health Statement*.

At the Hillston, Hay and Balranald Sheep Store sales in 2011 there were a number of consignments that came in with no National Sheep Health Statements.

The National Sheep Health Statement is the key to understanding OJD (ovine Johne's disease) risk when trading sheep. Since it was found in Australia in 1980, OJD has proven to be a costly disease. It spreads slowly, is difficult to detect early on, reduces weight gain and wool production, and can kill about 10% of adult sheep each year if left unmanaged.

The statement also provides information on other diseases, such as footrot, ovine brucellosis, and lice, and any treatments used on your sheep, such as vaccines, drenches, flystrike preventatives, and lice treatments.

National Sheep Health Statements were produced at the request of the sheep industry. Their purpose is to make sheep trading easier and less risky by providing a nationally consistent declaration for sheep health. They were developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders.

As the Western Division is an OJD Exclusion area, a Statement can be a very important marketing tool.

You can be fined and prosecuted under the *Stock Diseases Act 1923* Clause 20H (1) (a) for not providing a National Sheep Health Statement when required.

The penalty notice is \$550, or you can be prosecuted (maximum penalty \$11,000).

National Sheep Health Statements can be obtained from your agents, DPI offices, or LHPA offices, or off the web at:

<http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/toolkit/declarations-and-statements/> ■

Struggles for survival at Mt Poole: people and plants

The outback is full of tales of toil against the odds. Here's one you may not have heard.

In the summer months of early 1845 in a remote part of north-west NSW, a struggle for survival was unfolding. Explorer Charles Sturt and his party, en route to find an elusive inland sea in the centre of Australia, had reached a small creek not far from the township we now know as Milparinka, just south of present day Tibooburra.

Upon reaching the creek, Sturt and his party established a depot. The severe hot weather, lack of water and poor health of the men required a forced encampment that was unable to be broken until the middle of July, almost 6 months later.

Scurvy had set in, with both Sturt and his assistant James Poole developing the debilitating illness. By May 1845 Poole was losing his battle for survival. Unable to eat, the men sensed that the end was near. Poole suggested that to keep the men busy a stone cairn could be erected on top of a nearby hill. We now know the hill as 'Mt Poole', and the remnants of the cairn are protected within a monument reserve managed by the NPWS. Poole lost his battle with the elements and died at the depot in July 1845.

Almost 170 years later a new struggle for survival is unfolding at Mt Poole. A rare and little known shrub, *Xerothamnella parvifolia*, or xero bush, is battling against the elements for its own survival as a species.

In better times xero bush occurred in isolated locations within a band that extended roughly from north-east South Australia, through north-west NSW and into south-west Queensland. The species is thought to have disappeared from South Australia and has not been sighted for many years in Queensland, leaving the single isolated population at Mt Poole of around 100 individuals as potentially the only remnants.

Although little is known about xero bush, visual inspections of individual plants have shown that they were a food source for herbivores. Almost all of the individual plants were being eaten to the point where they were surviving largely in the crevasses of rocks, where some protection was being provided. In all likelihood the drought wasn't helping, either.

With the support of landholders from both Mt Poole and Mt Sturt stations, the NPWS began a trial in 2009 erecting wire mesh 'hats' over a small number of individual plants. The hats are around the size of a 44-gallon drum and provide total exclusion from browsing by animals ranging in size from rabbits to goats and kangaroos.

The initial response was outstanding. The xero bush protected by the hats quickly regrew to almost fill its protective enclosures. The NPWS responded too, returning to the remote site on a number of occasions, erecting hats or combined enclosures over all but a few of the remaining plants.

The response of the xero bush to its new homes continues to be impressive. Recent observations are that the plants are thriving: they are flowering and producing substantial quantities of seed.

Previously, the only chance of seeing this lovely little bush in flower and strong health would be to seek out the only protected specimen in the Mt Annan Botanic Gardens. However, now, thanks to a successful conservation project, the xero bush appears to be reaching its full potential in its native habitat.

One might wonder whether the members of Sturt's party stopped to admire this beautiful shrub during their daily collection of rocks for the cairn. The cairn still stands as a contemporary reminder of the human tragedy associated with the expedition. NPWS is working to ensure that the xero bush, too, can stand and prosper for 170 years or more into the future. ■

By Mark Peacock
Director
Western NPWS Dubbo



Above: Before conservation – xero bush. Photo by Mark Peacock



Above: After conservation – xero bush. Photo by Mark Peacock

Copper deficiency in the Western Division of NSW

By Dermot McNerney
Veterinary Officer
NSW DPI Dareton

Copper deficiency in lambs – often called swayback or enzootic ataxia – is caused by low copper levels in the ewes' diet during pregnancy and low copper intake by the lamb during the first few months of life.

A mob of about 500 ewes was grazing saltbush, barley grass, clover and crowfoot in the Lake Cargelligo region. The earliest lambs were approximately 6 weeks old in early November, when I visited the property 3 days after viewing a video clip of a ewe and a lamb that had both been found with coordination difficulties. In the video the lamb had complete loss of function in the hind limbs. The ewe was lying down and alert and had a body condition score of 4. Her inability to stand appeared to be causing her distress. Rams continued to run with the mob of lambing ewes.

On arrival both the ewe and lamb were found dead. The ewe's carcass was too decomposed for a useful post mortem. A post mortem on the lamb revealed a spinal abscess in the lumbar area.

Another lamb was found with coordination difficulties, but only in the hind limbs. When it was made to walk, it walked with a side-to-side swaying motion for a few seconds before its legs knuckled and it fell to the ground. Blood copper levels in this lamb were very low (1.7 $\mu\text{mol/L}$).

There are two main causes of copper deficiency in stock: primary copper deficiency due to low copper levels in plants or soil, and secondary copper deficiency caused by eating large amounts of plant molybdenum and sulfur, which, together with copper, form a highly insoluble compound that is excreted, so that little copper is actually absorbed. Adequate copper levels are required in the growing foetus and animal for central nervous

system development. Without it, the brain and spinal cord don't develop properly, and this in turn causes coordination problems. Once clinical signs have developed, treatment is of little value. The key issue in copper deficiency is prevention.

Copper deficiency in sheep is more prevalent during periods of lush growth of green feed. The copper intake of grazing sheep increases as pastures dry off over the summer period; marginal deficiencies detected in mid spring are usually resolved by mid-summer. Unfortunately, the demand for copper is high during pregnancy and lactation and during the rapid growth of lambs in the first 3 months of life. This coincides with the presence of lush feed with relatively low copper levels during spring.

Copper deficiency occurs naturally in many parts of world, but in Australia there are very few published reports of it. In 1983, copper-deficient areas in Australia were identified; they included two small, well-defined areas in north-east NSW. There have also been verbal reports of copper deficiency near Cobar in the 1990s.

Lambs with copper deficiency may show clinical signs at birth in severe cases. More commonly, lambs appear normal at birth and then between 1 and 6 months they develop signs of unco-ordination.

Further reading on copper deficiency can be found at: <http://www.flockandherd.net.au/sheep/reader/enzootic%20ataxia.htm>

<http://www.nadis.org.uk/DiseasesSheep/Swayback/Swayback%20prevention.htm>

http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/objtwr/imported_assets/content/pw/ah/dis/cat/fn028_2004.pdf ■

Below left: Abscess in the lower spine of the first lamb examined; Below right: This 6-week-old lamb could walk only for few seconds before its hind legs knuckled and it fell to the ground. Before falling, the animal showed a distinct swaying motion. Note that this lamb is shown on the owner's front lawn, not on the grass it was grazing! Photos by Dermot McNerney



Shearing rams in the hotter months – be careful!

Skin damage was seen recently in SAMM (South African meat Merino) and Merino rams in flocks on two properties in the far north-west after shearing. In November, both mobs had been sedated with acepromazine, then shorn and treated with Extinosad Pour-On.

Looking at what might have caused the skin damage has led to some interesting conclusions. The obvious one was that the skin damage was caused by **a simple chemical burn** from application of the Extinosad Pour-On during the heat of the day.

But there's more to the story. We found that **the time the rams were kept in the direct sun** immediately after shearing and backlining made a difference. On one of the properties, far fewer rams put in the shade were affected, and they were less severely affected (46% affected and 7% badly) than rams placed in direct sun (75% affected and 56% badly affected). On the other place, where rams were backlined late in the day, 70% were affected and 30% badly. So sun exposure after shearing made a difference. This could have been from either heat (infrared) or ultraviolet (UV), as some rams had healed sunburn under their tails, but no back lesions.

The body temperature of each ram was important. Fewer rams with lower body temperatures were affected, and they were affected less severely, than was the case with rams with high body temperatures. This was discovered by chance, when body temperatures were taken in October on one property as part of an attempt to understand the effect of heat and body temperatures on low lamb-marking percentages. The back lesions were seen in December, during brucellosis testing.

Sedation probably worsened the situation. Sedatives can prevent animals from regulating their body temperatures, and this probably worsened the situation for those animals that already had high body temperatures. Some sedated rams have died at shearing, possibly because of difficulty regulating their body temperatures, especially if they are overdosed.

Both properties had better rain than usual in the month in which the rams were

sheared, and there was some minor dermo (dermatophilosis, a bacterial infection of the skin that comes after wetting) on some rams. Age and breed didn't appear to be important.

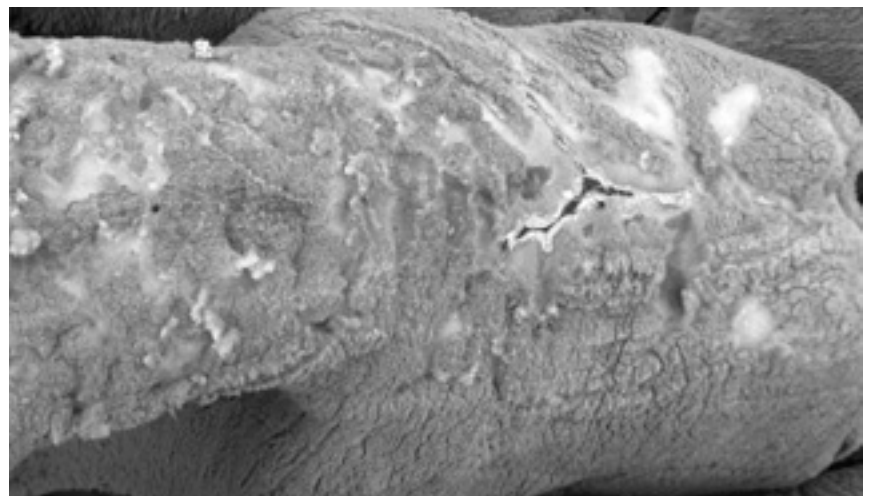
There are a few approaches open to owners to prevent skin damage on shorn sheep, including not using sedation and Extinosad Pour-On together; not sedating in the warmer months; or putting sedated, shorn rams treated with Extinosad Pour-On into the shade afterwards.

There's one more potential solution. It came as a real surprise for us to discover that there was a really tight link between a ram's body temperature in October and its temperature in December. I had thought that there would be little similarity, given the many things that can change body temperature on the same day in a sheep. It was clear that rams that were

Continued on page 14

By Greg Curran
Veterinary Officer and
Technical Specialist
NSW DPI Broken Hill

Below: Severe skin lesions occurred on rams after they had been sedated with acepromazine before shearing and treated with Extinosad Pour-On off-shears in the direct sun. *Photos by Greg Curran*



Continued from page 13

'cooler' in October were cooler in December, and the hotter rams in October were hotter again in December. In summary, rams with lower body temperatures handle heat better: that is, they are 'thermotolerant'.

So one possibility might be to **buy rams with lower body temperatures**. Rams with lower body temperatures should be better able to handle shearing, sedation, direct sun and any skin damage due to chemicals. This repeatability of body temperature at different times has been seen before in both sheep and cattle, and high body temperature has been linked to poor reproductive performance in females. In cattle, body temperature is not

only repeatable, but also highly heritable, and the better reproductive performance in cows with lower body temperature is heritable, too. Surprisingly, it appears that no one has measured the heritability of body temperature in sheep. Moreover, there is some possibility that selecting rams for their ability to handle the extreme heat of western NSW might improve reproductive performance as well. But there's a long way to go before these theories are tested and proven.

I don't know of any studs that are selecting for ability to handle heat. At this stage, finding thermotolerant rams would involve taking a thermometer along, and using it, when looking at rams. This would raise some eyebrows, and perhaps noses! ■

Wiltipoll field day at Kars Station

By Pip Hughes
Kars Station
Broken Hill

An inaugural Wiltipoll information field day was held at Kars Station, via Broken Hill, at the end of 2011; it was attended by about 60 people. Wiltipolls were developed on Kars Station and have been run there for the past 15 years. The aim of the field day was to further promote the breed in the region and to educate local pastoralists on its benefits.

Wiltipolls are a low-maintenance prime lamb breed that completely shed their fleece annually; they therefore need no shearing, crutching, tail docking or mulesing.

Guest speakers at the field day included San Jolly from Productive Nutrition SA, who spoke about sheep and lamb nutrition in the Rangelands and the development of her

Wiltipoll–Dorper composite flock at Kapunda, SA. Sue Shelton from NASAA (National Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Australia) Certified Organic in Stirling SA, spoke about converting an existing prime lamb enterprise to an organic one, and Hayden Cope demonstrated the Pratley sheep two-way auto-drafter.

Well-known Wiltipoll breeder Annie Hughes spoke on the development of the Kars Wiltipoll flock and the running of the breed on the station as compared with running Merinos.

An auction was held at the field day; 30 rams sold to \$600 a head.

For details see www.wiltipoll.com.au ■



Right: Young Wiltipoll ewes being auctioned at the Wiltipoll field day at Kars Station. *Photo by Pip Hughes*

Western Lands Advisory Council Communiqué

At its 23rd meeting, in Cobar on 24 November 2011, the Western Lands Advisory Council welcomed a new Advisory Council member, Mr Des Jones, who will be representing the interests of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

The Advisory Council members were given two presentations at the meeting.

Paul Seager and Brett Norman from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) at Broken Hill provided an update on the *Draft Regional Pest Management Strategy 2012–2015*.

The second presentation was facilitated by Karen Kneipp, who is based in Bourke for the Western CMA; this presentation updated the members on the Native Vegetation Regulations and Property Vegetation Plans for the Western Division.

Although 95% of the Western Division of NSW is uncleared, its vegetation communities have been modified through grazing and changes in fire regimes. Under the Native Vegetation Act, CMAs are responsible for helping land managers with on-ground management and clearing of native vegetation. DPI is responsible for monitoring and compliance functions. Six CMAs operate within the Western Division: Western, Central West, Lachlan, Murray, Murrumbidgee and Lower Murray Darling. The mechanism for implementing the new system is voluntary agreements between landholders and CMAs (called Property Vegetation Plans, PVPs) and agreements between the CMAs and landholders for grant-funded projects.

The Review of the Native Vegetation Regulation is out for public comment, closing on 30 March 2012.

At the meeting, Andrew Bell, the Western Lands Commissioner, updated members on various matters. The Wild Dog Destruction Board conducted its annual inspection of the dog fence in August 2011 and found that it was in good order, despite the extreme forces of nature thrown at it in recent years. At the time of the meeting, a significant section of the fence remained under floodwaters and was expected to stay that way for some months to come. This section, comprising about 23 km, will need to be totally replaced.

NSW Treasury has acknowledged the anomaly that has existed for the Unincorporated Area not previously being eligible to apply for Natural Disaster Relief and Assistance Schemes. Amendments are now expected to be made to the Natural Disaster Guidelines specifically relating to the eligibility criteria for the Wild Dog Destruction Board, the Tibooburra Water Supply

Trust and the Tibooburra Aerodrome Reserve Trust to access joint commonwealth and state funding to repair public infrastructure following Natural Disaster Declarations. This advice includes making claims for Natural Disaster events that pre-date amendments to the guidelines.

The NSW Treasurer has approved a 50% waiver of Western Lands Lease rural rents for the 2011–2012 rent year. The Advisory Council thanked the government and Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP, Minister for Primary Industries, for this help to landholders.

Advisory Council members were updated on the progress of the Legal Roads Network Project (see the article on page 2 in this Newsletter).

Sharon Hawke, Assistant Western Lands Commissioner, updated the members on the Western Division Range Condition Assessment Program (WDRCAP). The 2011–2012 program has a target of 70 nominated properties to be completed as part of the WDRCAP and 70 other properties to be completed as a result of other inspections, making 140 inspections in total.

As at 31 October 2011, 22 nominated properties and 44 other properties have been inspected.

Sharon Hawke updated the members on a brochure that Crown Lands is preparing on Public Access to Inland Rivers in the Western Division of NSW. The inland rivers of Western NSW are highly valued for recreation by both those who live in the Western Division and those who visit. Access to the rivers is often through the adjoining Western Lands Lease, and this can cause problems at times. The brochure is intended to clarify these issues.

The next meeting of the Western Lands Advisory Council will be held in Cobar on 29 March 2012.

Some time after the Advisory Council meeting, Andrew Bell and myself were able to brief Katrina Hodgkinson MP, Minister for Primary Industries, on the matters the Advisory Council represents. These include the serious mining issues in Lightning Ridge, which need to be urgently addressed, as they are dividing the community. Fortunately, the Wilcox Report, commissioned by the NSW Government to look into the problems facing landholders affected by opal claims in Lightning Ridge, has now been released; submissions have now closed for comments on the report.

For any further information please contact Mrs Jenny McLellan, Chair, mobile: 0419 279 610. ■

**By Jenny McLellan
Chair, Western Lands
Advisory Council**

On-farm biosecurity: never drop your guard!

By Dermot McNerney
Veterinary Officer
NSW DPI Dareton

A producer called in mid January to say that about 20 of his best rams had enlarged scrotums. This producer is a successful Dorper ram breeder with an enterprise consisting of 160 seven-month-old and 90 mixed-aged rams and 2500 Dorper ewes. Rams are joined twice a year (December to February, and again in May for 10 weeks). At this time, the mixed-age rams were running with the ewes. The owners prided themselves on the quality of their rams, including their disease-free status. When I examined the rams I found that the scrotums of the selected mob of 7-month-old rams were enlarged by up to three times their normal size.

When examined, the scrotums of the selected mob of 7-month-old rams were enlarged by up to three times their normal size. There was evidence of epididymitis (inflammation of the epididymis), rather than orchitis (inflammation of the testes). The three principal differential diagnoses were infection with the bacteria *Histophilus somnus*, *Actinobacillus seminis* or *Brucella ovis*. The first two are generally purulent (pus-producing) infections, but the last one is not. One of the rams was euthanased and necropsied.

The infection appeared to be unilateral: one side of the scrotum was three times the size of the other, which appeared normal. Opening of the scrotum on the enlarged side revealed a normal-sized testis surrounded by an epididymis that was hardly recognisable because of massive inflammatory changes. Samples were taken for

histology and culture. Blood samples were also taken from four of the affected mob for *Brucella ovis* antibodies.

The laboratory results revealed pure cultures of *B. ovis*; the blood samples also showed high levels of antibody to this organism. To the owners, who prided themselves in keeping their flock free of ovine brucellosis, this was a major setback.

So what needed to be done? The mixed-age rams were not due to be removed from the ewes for another few weeks, but work could start on the younger mob. Blood testing needed to be aggressive to remove any animals that tested positive. Samples were initially taken at 7- to 10-day intervals. This would continue until there were no more positives, when the sampling frequency could be reduced to monthly. To date, about 50% of the young rams have been culled because of *B. ovis* infection. The mixed-age rams were eventually removed from the ewes; these rams were also infected, and more than 50% are expected to be culled.

The cost to this business has been conservatively estimated at \$171,000, made up of loss of sales, cost of replacements, and additional costs of labour to muster for blood sampling. Not factored into these costs are costs associated with lower conception rates in the forthcoming lambing crop and additional spread of the lambing period.

So how did the landholders get to this point? The owners confessed to dropping their biosecurity guard.



Right: Seven-month-old Dorper rams with enlarged scrotums. Photo: Dermot McNerney

Having been brucellosis-free for many years, they admitted to having become complacent, and last year, because of other pressing matters, only a fraction of the rams were tested (those tested were negative). In addition, their boundary fences are approximately 100 km in total, and some sections are not Dorper-proofed. One of their neighbours is now strongly suspected of having brucellosis in his flock, and he had often returned several stray stock to these owners. Normally the strays would have been quarantined and tested, but again, the owners had become too busy with other matters. To make matters worse, another close neighbour and this owner sometimes swapped rams, as both had been brucellosis-free for many years. However, last year, the neighbour also let his guard down and for the first time did no testing. On hearing the news of the brucellosis diagnosis, the neighbour started immediately to test. Sadly, his infection rate is similar to the one described above and will be even more costly because of the size of the operation.

So what are the take-away messages from this case?

- Once you have incurred the effort and expense of eradicating a disease from your enterprise, use biosecurity to keep it out.
- How do you keep it out? Among other things, secure all boundary fences. Buy stock only after reviewing their sheep health statement and only after you are satisfied that you are buying disease-free sheep. Regular surveillance (in this case, blood testing) will let you know if infection has slipped in, so you can take action quickly.
- Consider joining the NSW Ovine Brucellosis Accredited Free Flock Scheme (see Primefact 411 on the DPI website). This scheme ensures that you remain aware of all the biosecurity-breach possibilities, rather than simply relying on annual blood testing. You may also benefit through higher prices for your breeding stock if

you can provide assurances that your stock are brucellosis free.

Some other points about *B. ovis* infection:

- Once you have an infected ram, no matter how low the antibody titre, you should cull the ram. It will not self-cure.
- Rams spread disease in the non-breeding season through homosexual activity and sniffing genitals.
- Merinos and crossbreds have a much lower incidence of the disease than other breeds.
- Ewes are much more resistant to infection than rams. *Brucella ovis* has been recorded in ewes but is not a common feature of disease spread. Ewes play a role in passive venereal spread (e.g. an infected ram deposits infected semen in the ewe, which is then served by another, uninfected, ram).
- Disease spreads most rapidly during the breeding season. Separate young and old rams during breeding.
- Goats do not become infected with *B. ovis*, even when goats and sheep cohabit.
- Keep young rams and older rams separate.
- Ewe fertility will be reduced by having infected rams. This results in poor lambing rates and prolonged lambing seasons.
- Finally, a blood test is only a snapshot of disease status at any point in time. A seronegative animal may still be incubating the disease, or a negative animal may become infected the day after blood testing. The message here is: Do not only rely on blood testing to keep disease out!

For further *B. ovis* information see Primefact 472: at http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/145824/ovine-brucellosis.pdf ■

Below left: The enlarged side of the scrotum has been opened up through the midline. Note the normal-sized testis surrounded by the massive inflamed epididymis; Below right: Incised scrotum showing one normal testis and epididymis (left) alongside the enlarged unopened side. Photos: Dermot McNerney



Around the Traps: Peppin-Shaw Ewe Flock Competition 2012

By Sally Ware
Livestock Officer
NSW DPI Hay

Celebrating its 21st Anniversary, the Peppin-Shaw Ewe Flock Competition was held in early February in the Hay district. Covering nearly 1000 km during the 2 days of the Competition, 130 people visited 10 district properties, met the locals, inspected thousands of 1-year-old ewes and discussed many industry topics, including 6-month shearing programs, various property stock-watering systems, lice control methods, shearer and shed-hand training issues and the use of sheep electronic ear tags.

The Competition was won by the biggest flock on display, consisting of 2100 May–June 2010

drop ewes owned by the historic Mungadal property, which in 2010 came under the new management of Paraway Pastoral (Manager, Jock Campbell). Using a 6-month shearing program and a flexible stock grazing regime based on vegetation management, the flock also won the Jock Dunn fertility award for its high lambing percentage, with 5822 lambs dropped in 2010 from 5307 ewes joined. Judges for the Competition were Cam Munro ('Egelabra', Warren) and Ian Evans from Australian Wool Innovation in Deniliquin. The Associate Judge was Dale Bruns. ■

Right: Local David Davies from 'Walgrove', Hay, telling a yarn on the Peppin-Shaw bus. *Photo by Sally Ware*; Far right: West of Hillston and heading for 'Tholloboy' from 'Yandembah' on Day One, Kevin Gough from Purtils Buses fixes a fan belt on the Peppin-Shaw bus (yet again!). *Photo by Cara Jefferies, The Land*



Right: The Peppin-Shaw bus fixed and heading to 'Tholloboy', west of Hillston; Far right: Early morning on Day Two, at the Avenel sheep yards at Wanganella. Colin and Mandy McCrabb's sheep from their property 'Millabong', are being judged. *Photos by Sally Ware*





Above left: Paraway Pastoral Managers Jock Campbell (Mungadal) and Magnus Aitken (Steam Plains) with the winning Mungadal ewes. *Photo by Cara Jefferies, The Land*; Above right: Judges Dale Bruns and Cam Munro listening to first-time entrant Roger Job (with his family, Thomas, Olivia, Jackie and Angus) address the crowd at 'Tholloboy'. *Photo by Sally Ware*



L to R: (front) Jock and Lou Campbell of Paraway Pastoral Company, Mungadal, overall winners and winners of the Southern Area; (back) David and Barbara Butcher, 'Bronte', winners of the Northern Area and third overall; Fiona and Joel Porter, 'Ramsay', second in the Southern Area and second overall; Dianne and Geoff Peters, 'Yandembah', second in the Northern Area and winners of the Ian Lilburne short wool award; (back) Mark Bazeley of Riverina Wool, Moama, major sponsor of the Competition; Jackie and Roger Job, 'Tholloboy', winners of the Encouragement Award; Sarah and Rowan Houston, 'Budgewah', winners of the Central Area and Best New Entry. *Photo by Sally Ware*

Even Better Reds: red Boer goat breeding in Ivanhoe

By Allie Jones
Livestock Officer
NSW DPI Bourke

Summary

Tony McGinty of Wallangarra Station, Ivanhoe, has found that by utilising the red Boer genetics in his herd he is increasing the carcase yields of rangeland goats yet still retains their superior vigour and durability without the damaging effects of obesity associated with the traditional Boer. Reproductive ability of the rangeland goat has also been maintained.

Overview

- Property: Wallangarra Station, approximately 55 km north-east of Ivanhoe, NSW
- Livestock mix: Approximately 3000 Dorper ewes and 5000 breeding does
- Area: 30,000 ha
- Rainfall (average annual): 300 mm
- Target market: domestic trade market at 4–6 months of age, approximately 14 kg dressed carcase weight, primarily to domestic Melbourne markets.

In 1985, when the wool industry collapsed, Tony McGinty began an adventure that he did not realise at the time would be a profitable enterprise change. Tony started to investigate what he could turn to after wool. Rangeland goats were already inhabiting his property and were familiarised and habituated to the arid conditions of western NSW. Tony believed there was a profitable future in goat production.

In 1985 cashmere goats were trialled at Wallangarra. However, in 1993 they were dispersed, as vegetable matter in the fibre had become a considerable issue and a price deduction was received as a result. Cashmere was seen to be an impossible industry in Western NSW, as the proportion of cut obtained from the fibre was minimal. Also, the cashmere goats were not considered a dual purpose breed. The carcase attributes of the Boer and rangeland goat were much superior.

'Even Better Red Boer' became a registered stud in 2003. Tony spent 9 years on the show scene with his goats. Grand champion

sashes line the walls of the Wallangarra office, demonstrating Tony's success on the Western NSW show circuit with both his red Boers and his cashmere goats. However, Tony ceased showing goats a short time after he started to show the red Boers, as he believed the show scene was not focusing on practical commercial traits.

Tony has been successful in breeding the majority of the rangeland traits out of his breeding herd. This has taken 9 years of hard work and perseverance, with strict culling on character and temperament. The end result is that he now has a breed with superior carcase qualities and a herd that is much quieter and easier to handle. A poll gene has also been introduced to the herd.

Tony's property consists of 18 paddocks fenced with hinge joint (a mix of 6, 7 and 8 line). The paddocks range in size from 1600 to 7200 ha. Six holding paddocks, which are 80 ha in size, are also utilised. Tony makes use of 3 sets of steel yards for mustering and drafting. They are situated in positions that are easily accessible from all points of the property (one in the middle and one at each end).

A significant number of slaughter goats are turned off per year at Wallangarra. Tony turns off 5 month old kids to the domestic market at 34 kg live weight. In comparison, a rangeland goat at 5 months of age will only weigh between 12 and 15 kg. Any goats on the property over 34 kg live weight will enter the export market. All young red Boer bucks are sold to commercial breeders across the eastern states of Australia, including Tasmania.

How did it all begin?

The very first 'Even Better Red Boer' appeared in a draft of Condobolin does that were bought onto Wallangarra. Tony decided the red Boer was a far superior goat to the red headed, white bodied traditional Boer. For 3 years Tony sourced red does that suited his enterprise and breeding objectives from the Armidale district. An artificial insemination program was conducted in 2003 to secure bloodlines and gain bucks for his breeding program to continue extensively improving his herd.

The red-headed, white-bodied traditional African Boer was trialled heavily on the McGinty property from 1996 to 2000 until they made the decision that the red Boer was much better suited to their environment and enterprise. The traditional Boer failed to breed successfully with the does, as they did not adapt to the environmental conditions of western NSW: they were dying and disappearing. Tony believes the traditional Boer was bred for intensive hobby farming and not extensive livestock enterprises,

whereas the red Boer is a better breeder, is hardier in arid conditions, has an improved and more uniform carcase, does not get over-fat, and becomes heavier at a younger age.

The current issues and challenges Tony is facing in the goat industry are the lack of skilled labour readily available to work on properties and the lack of red genetic bloodlines accessible in Australia. In addition, more emphasis needs to be placed on breeding poll goats, as they are the future for goat enterprises. ■

Tony McGinty of 'Wallangarra' at Ivanhoe with a herd of his 'Even Better Red Boers'. *Photo courtesy of McGinty family.*



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0429 035 961
Susan.Walla@cma.nsw.gov.au

WHAT'S HAPPENING: Sit-down workshops covering wild dog distribution, control tools and options, strategies to prevent wild dog incursions, and integrated pest management. Hands-on demonstrations and training for using soft-catch traps, M44 ejectors and Lethal Trap Devices (LTDs).

YOU MUST RSVP BY SUN 22ND APRIL TO:

Ben Allen
NSW DPI Broken Hill
(08) 8088 9300
benjamin.allen@dpi.nsw.gov.au

**TUESDAY 1ST MAY
9.00AM – 3.00PM**

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Department of Primary Industries

Wild dog management *('Bidura' Balranald workshop)*

WHO: Everyone interested in managing wild dogs – graziers, public land managers, NRM officers, you ...

WHERE: Bidura Station (50 km Nth of Balranald on the Ivanhoe Rd into Marma Ck Rd)

LUNCH PROVIDED

For street directions and information on the available facilities contact:

Ann Duryea
LHPA Manager
Balranald
0429 201 691
ann.duryea@lhpa.org.au

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**WEDNESDAY 2ND MAY
9.00AM – 3.00PM**

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Deadline for articles for the next Issue 141 of the Western Division Newsletter is Tuesday 1 May 2012. Please send articles to Sally Ware, NSW DPI, PO Box 393, Hay 2711 email to sally.ware@dpi.nsw.gov.au or phone (02) 6990 1874.