

UNFS UPDATE



Upper North Farming Systems Newsletter

January/February 2014

A Big Year Planned for the Upper North Farming Systems Group

Research Activities

We have a large number of trials and demonstrations happening throughout the district this year. If you are interested in being involved with any of our trials or demonstrations please contact the person listed with the project. We are always keen to have more members involved in our research activities. Some of these projects and the contact person for that project include;

- Crop Sequencing Trial, Role and risks of break crops in a stubble retention system - Michael Wurst
- Profit and Risk Management - Barry Mudge
- Adoption of pasture production zoning in the Southern Flinders Ranges - Michael Wurst
- Management strategies for onion weed control under stubble retention - Ruth Sommerville
- Yield Prophet - Barry Mudge
- Efficient Grain Production compared with Nitrous Oxide Emissions - Michael Wurst
- Maintaining Profitable farming systems with retained stubbles in Upper North SA - Ruth Sommerville
- Seeder Set up in break crops and the implications for stubble management/ Post Pasture Seeding Demonstration - Canola - Matt McCallum
- Crown Rot and White Grain Management - Michael Wurst
- Paddock Scale Demonstration of variable rate nitrogen application across various stubble loads - Joe Koch
- Surface Cover Grazing Systems Trial - Mary-Anne Young

Field Days and Extension Activities

The UNFS will host two general field days in 2014. Our Annual Field Day will be held on **Thursday the 7th of August** with a full day of research outcomes and information sessions from leading industry representatives. We will also hold a Spring Crop Walk on **Thursday the 11th of September**. This is likely to be a half-day visit to prominent field research sites throughout the Upper North Region.

2014 Eastern Low Rainfall Zone Field Tour

In July we will be taking a bus load of interested members on a field trip through the Eastern Low Rainfall Zones of the Riverland, Mallee, Sunraysia and Central West NSW. The field trip has been made possible by an Industry Development Grant from the GRDC. The majority of the cost of the Field Trip will be covered by the Grant and activities will involve meeting with innovative farmers and the Mallee Sustainable Farming and Central West Farming Systems Groups, tours of relevant properties and enterprises and a few thousand kilometres. Dates are yet to be finalised but it is likely to be the week of the 20-25th of July. Expressions of interest are being sought for this trip as numbers are limited.

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- Soil erosion Risk Report

Water Capture and Storage Systems in the Upper North

Mary Anne Young, Rural Solutions

Through the Sustainable Dryland Agriculture Initiative funded by DEWNR, the UNFS has undertaken the Better Surface Cover Under Grazing Project with Rural Solutions. As part of this project an investigation into Water Capture and Storage Systems was undertaken.

An assured supply of good quality water in every paddock is essential for a rotational grazing system. One of the biggest stumbling blocks for farmers looking to implement rotational grazing is to get water to stock where they are grazing, rather than having them track long distances to a dam or trough. In the Upper North, many groundwater supplies are quite saline with some being so saline they are not suitable for stock. Dams are unreliable – they're full when the water isn't really needed; and evaporation and seepage losses can be over 50%. The Willochra catchment is regarded as being "oversubscribed" ie has too many dams in the catchment already so putting in a new dam will require "trading in" or removing an existing dam.

Trevor Gum is implementing a rotational grazing system on his property and faces the challenge of providing a supply of good quality water in each paddock. Earlier this year Trevor and Di Gum, plus a few other interested farmers visited some farms on Eyre Peninsula where run-off from plastic sheeting laid over a small area of land (<1 ha) is collected, stored and reticulated over the property.

All the travellers were impressed with what they saw and recognised its potential for their properties. One of the ideas they picked up on was that water collected from the sheeted catchment could be stored in tanks that do not lose water through evaporation or seepage and are easier to install.

Stephen Latz from "All Water" was asked to visit a couple of properties in the Coomooroo area and provide advice and a design for a sheeted catchment that would collect water in a sump and drain into tanks. He based the design on Trevor Gum's place – on the western side of the Coomooroo Hill where the altitude would allow water to be gravity fed to tanks and troughs lower down on the property. The cost of the sheeting of an area of 2,400 m² and pipe required was about \$34,000. On top of this would be the cost of preparing the land (ensuring it is free of stones and other things that could damage the sheeting) and the tanks.

A copy of the report is available on request as is a report from the group that travelled to Eyre Peninsula to investigate the options on ground. The UNFS is working with the Upper North Group of the Northern and Yorke NRM Board to continue to investigate these options for water capture and storage further.

THE BANGOR FIRE

A Big Thankyou to all of the Community that have helped out during the Bangor Fire. The fire was burning out of control for a number of days and threatened significant numbers of properties. Due to the dedication and hard work of the CFS volunteers and the community the number of houses, livestock and infrastructure that was lost was minimised. Unfortunately however, a number of homes, many kilometres of fencing, hectares of forest and pasture and numerous animals were destroyed or damaged.

FIRE RECOVERY ASSISTANCE - Primary Producers SA and Livestock SA are working together to co-ordinate a register to assist those affected by recent bushfires. We urge you to help if you can or to register for assistance if you have been affected. Further information and contact details can be found on the Hart Field Day Website: www.hartfieldsite.org.au

Conservation on Farms - Survey

Check out this interesting blog and take a few minutes to offer your thoughts and/or experience for a market research project on conservation on farms and what people see as important.

Leading ecologist, Hugh Possingham has called for a new order – saying about half of all conservation of Australia's wildlife needs to be done by individuals, not governments.

This five-minute survey asks you how city and country people can come together to support landscape-wide conservation - a move that may be needed if the integrity of our parks and reserves are to survive long-term. It asks how we can support farmers in not only growing our food but also playing an increasingly significant role in managing parts of their farms for conservation. Individual responses to the survey are confidential and results can be emailed to participants.

[http://
www.ecoxchange.com.au/2013/07/
environmental-
benefits-on-farmland-
survey/](http://www.ecoxchange.com.au/2013/07/environmental-benefits-on-farmland-survey/)

GRDC UPDATE

Ruth Sommerville

The Grains Research & Development Corporation (GRDC) is one of our major funding bodies and continues to be a primary source of information for growers across the country. For more information on the following topics go to their website; www.grdc.com.au

- The Grains Research & Development Corporation (GRDC) Annual Report 2012-13 is now available on the GRDC website.
- Looking for facts in the Southern Region? Visit GRDC's Fact Sheet webpage www.grdc.com.au/factsheets. Recent Fact Sheets include;
 - Direct Heading Canola Fact Sheet - Early Planning Key to Direct Heading
 - European Earwigs Fact Sheet - Earwigs in the Medium and High Rainfall Zones
 - Black Portuguese Millipedes & Slaters Fact Sheet - Millipedes and Slaters in No-Till Systems
 - Plant-Available Nitrogen Fact Sheet - Maximising Nitrogen Availability to Crops
- The GRDC Research Update for Advisers is on in Adelaide on the 25th-26th of February 2014.
- GRDC Grains Research Update for Growers is on in Crystal Brook on the 27th of February, 2014, 8:15am - 1:00pm at the Crystal Brook Football Club. Further information can be found at www.orm.com.au or by contacting Matt McCarthy -
Email: admin@orm.com.au **Phone:** 03 5441 6176



What do you value on your property? Do you see yourself as a conservationist?
Photo: www.ecoxchange.com.au/2013/07/environmental-benefits-on-farmland-survey/

Insect Pest Management: Sustainable management of insect pests in grain crops

Is the insect a pest or beneficial? Is control action economic / warranted? When is action needed? What should be considered when determining control options? Could management have avoided the problem?

Advisers and growers are invited to participate in a GRDC supported workshop on insect management in grain crops

Topics include:

- Implementing an integrated approach to insect management and associated decision making process
- Monitoring, record keeping and economic thresholds
- Integrated pest management tools including cultural control, conserving beneficial insects & 'softer' or more 'selective' insecticide options

Key pest ecology and management strategies for regionally important crops

Workshops are targeted at advisers and leading growers who seek an improved understanding of insects and their management to implement more sustainable insect management practices. Workshops will focus on pests of local significance.

- **31st March - Kadina, SA** (Farm Shed) 8:30am – 1:30pm

- **1st April - Kapunda, SA** (Golf Club) 8:30am – 1:30pm

To register go to <http://icanrural.com.au/registration/IMGC.htm>

For further information contact John Cameron or Erica McKay on 029482 4930 or erica@icanrural.com.au or <http://www.icanrural.com.au>

Seasonal Report for protection of agricultural land from soil erosion

The November 2013 Soil Erosion Risk Seasonal Report has been recently released by the Northern and Yorke NRM Board.

The information presented in this report aims to assist land managers and advisors to understand the effects of recent seasonal conditions and land management practices on protection of agricultural land from soil erosion, and to indicate what strategies or actions might be needed to ensure adequate erosion protection going into the next season.

What type information is available?

The Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) conducts surveys to monitor trends in the protection of soil from the risk of erosion across the Northern and Yorke and other NRM regions. Data from other sources is also compiled to assist with interpretation of data from these surveys.

Summary

- Dry conditions during spring in 2013 resulted in little cover in pasture paddocks until June 2013.
- Stubbles provided the bulk of surface cover for erosion protection until seeding commenced in April 2013.
- Early-sown crops had good early vigour and provided a high level of surface cover.
- Whilst June and July rainfall were very much above average, dry conditions during spring resulted in growing season rainfall totals that were average to just above average.
- Given average residue break down over summer it is expected that on average across the region surface cover levels will be adequate for erosion protection in March 2014.
- Careful management of the grazing of paddocks by livestock over summer and autumn will be required to ensure that paddocks are adequately protected from erosion in March 2014.

More Info: To obtain a copy or for more information please contact:
Giles Forward
Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR)
Phone: (08) 8303 9450
Email: giles.forward@sa.gov.au

Making More From Sheep

A joint
initiative of



bredwell fedwell

A hands-on workshop about breeding and feeding to make more money, topics include:

- Improving ewe nutrition
- Developing a breeding goal
- Developing a feed budget
- Breeding better ewes

Participation fee: \$50 per person (inc GST)

Wednesday 19th of February 2014

Baderloo
'Wrattonbully'
262 Mayfield Road
Washpool
Spalding, SA

This workshop runs from 9am to 3:30pm
Lunch provided

To RSVP by Thursday 13th February, please contact:

- Ann Hammat 08 8665 4019 / 0408 654 019
ann@baderloo.com.au

For further information phone: MLA hotline: 1800 675 717 (free call within Australia) AWI hotline: 1800 070 099 (free call within Australia)

www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au

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