# UNFS UPDATE

UPPER NORTH FARMING SYSTEMS NEWSLETTER

March 2025 Edition

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## GEARING UP FOR 2025: RESEARCH, RESILIENCE AND READINESS

In this edition of our newsletter, you'll find updates on our ongoing projects, insights from recent industry events, and details on upcoming opportunities to connect and learn.

As we move further into 2025, the lessons from last season continue to shape our research and on-farm decision-making. With seeding just around the corner, now is the time to refine strategies, consider lessons from last season, and implement improvements. While challenges remain, there are also exciting developments in farming systems, trial results, and innovations that can help build resilience and productivity.

This newsletter highlights key findings, upcoming events, and research initiatives designed to support Upper North growers.

We look forward to another season of learning, adapting, and working together to strengthen our farming communities and thank you all for your ongoing support of Upper North Farming Systems.

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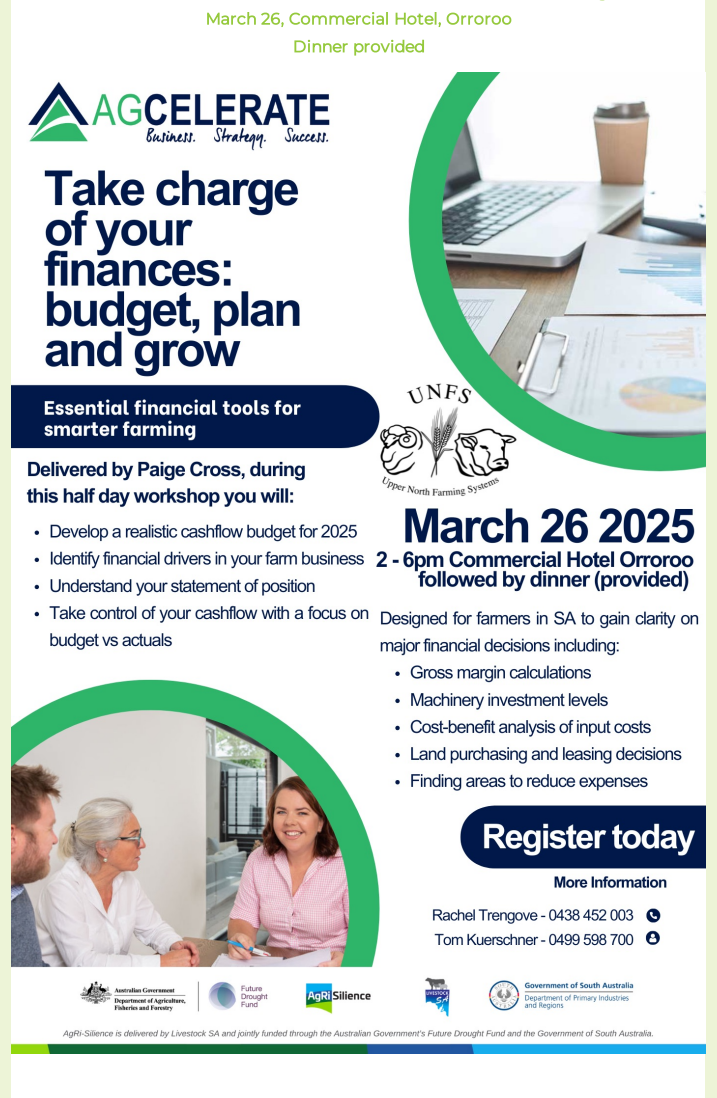
## UNFS upcoming events

### Essential financial tools for smarter farming

March 26, Commercial Hotel, Orroroo

Dinner provided



AGCELERATE Business. Strategy. Success.

**Take charge of your finances: budget, plan and grow**

**Essential financial tools for smarter farming**

**Delivered by Paige Cross, during this half day workshop you will:**

- Develop a realistic cashflow budget for 2025
- Identify financial drivers in your farm business
- Understand your statement of position
- Take control of your cashflow with a focus on budget vs actuals

**March 26 2025**

**2 - 6pm Commercial Hotel Orroroo followed by dinner (provided)**

Designed for farmers in SA to gain clarity on major financial decisions including:

- Gross margin calculations
- Machinery investment levels
- Cost-benefit analysis of input costs
- Land purchasing and leasing decisions
- Finding areas to reduce expenses

**Register today**

**More Information**

Rachel Trengove - 0438 452 003

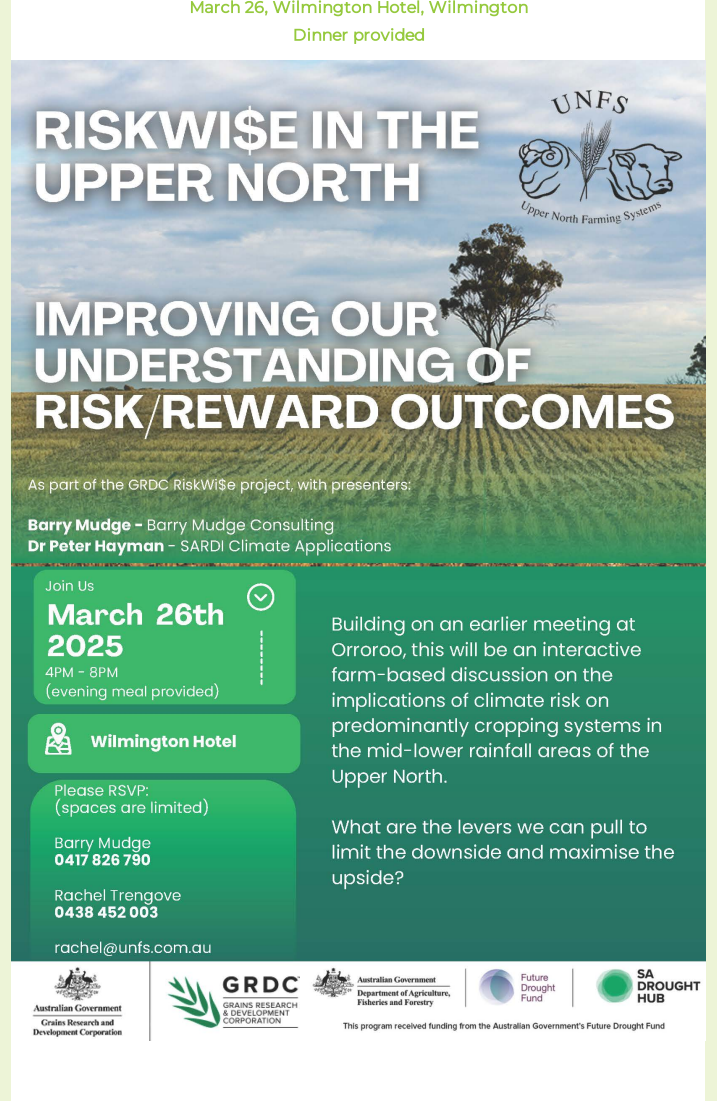
Tom Kuerschner - 0499 598 700

AgRi-Silience is delivered by Livestock SA and jointly funded through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and the Government of South Australia.

### Understand risk/reward outcomes in the Upper North

March 26, Wilmington Hotel, Wilmington

Dinner provided



**RISKWI$E IN THE UPPER NORTH**

**IMPROVING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF RISK/REWARD OUTCOMES**

As part of the GRDC RiskWi$e project, with presenters:

**Barry Mudge** - Barry Mudge Consulting

**Dr Peter Hayman** - SARDI Climate Applications

Join Us

**March 26th 2025**

4PM - 8PM

(evening meal provided)

**Wilmington Hotel**

Please RSVP:
(spaces are limited)

Barry Mudge
**0417 826 790**

Rachel Trengove
**0438 452 003**

rachel@unfs.com.au

Building on an earlier meeting at Orroroo, this will be an interactive farm-based discussion on the implications of climate risk on predominantly cropping systems in the mid-lower rainfall areas of the Upper North.

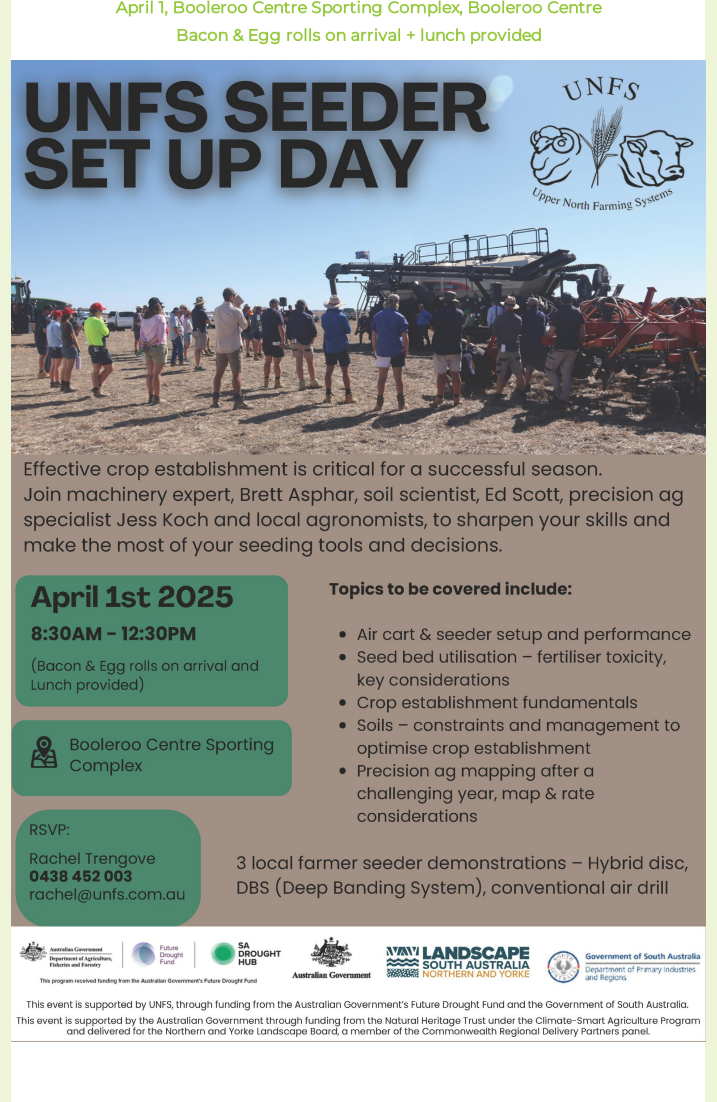
What are the levers we can pull to limit the downside and maximise the upside?

This program received funding from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund

### Seeder Set up Day

April 1, Booleroo Centre Sporting Complex, Booleroo Centre

Bacon & Egg rolls on arrival + lunch provided



**UNFS SEEDER SET UP DAY**

Effective crop establishment is critical for a successful season. Join machinery expert, Brett Asphar, soil scientist, Ed Scott, precision ag specialist Jess Koch and local agronomists, to sharpen your skills and make the most of your seeding tools and decisions.

**April 1st 2025**

**8:30AM - 12:30PM**

(Bacon & Egg rolls on arrival and Lunch provided)

Booleroo Centre Sporting Complex

RSVP:

Rachel Trengove
**0438 452 003**
rachel@unfs.com.au

**Topics to be covered include:**

- Air cart & seeder setup and performance
- Seed bed utilisation – fertiliser toxicity, key considerations
- Crop establishment fundamentals
- Soils – constraints and management to optimise crop establishment
- Precision ag mapping after a challenging year, map & rate considerations

3 local farmer seeder demonstrations – Hybrid disc, DBS (Deep Banding System), conventional air drill

This event is supported by UNFS, through funding from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and the Government of South Australia.
This event is supported by the Australian Government through funding from the Natural Heritage Trust under the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program and delivered by the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board, a member of the Commonwealth Regional Delivery Partners panel.

See all of UNFS events

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SPAA Society of Precision Agriculture Australia
GRDC GRAIN AUTOMATE
UNFS

### SAVE THE DATE

### Grain Automate Expo

### AUGUST 14, 2025 - Melrose showgrounds

Delivered by Society of Precision Agriculture Australia (SPAA) & Upper North Farming Systems (UNFS)

In lieu of our annual UNFS Expo, this year we are hosting a Grain Automate Expo at Melrose showgrounds.

The event will include educational sessions and demonstrations to support innovation in the Australian grains industry

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## CROPPING

### Frost Mitigation - A snapshot of 2024 Yield and Growth Insights

Written by Jade Rose

This project aimed to explore agronomic strategies—such as variety selection, crop type, and sowing time—to minimise frost impact in high-risk frost zones (red zones). The trial compared two zones: a **low frost risk "green zone"** and a **high frost risk "red zone"**, providing insights into how different management choices can improve crop resilience in frost-prone landscapes.

The trial evaluated yield, growth scores, and temperature fluctuations, while also comparing factors like canola performance and the establishment of frosted seed. In 2024, multiple challenges impacted crop outcomes, including late-season heat stress during critical grain-filling stages. Additionally, sharp temperature swings between cold nights and warm days placed further strain on crops, contributing to yield variability.

Some of the initial findings are:

Yield Comparisons
- Green zones consistently outperformed red zones, with red zone yields averaging ~79% of green yields.
- Early sowing showed benefits, particularly in April.
- Varietal differences were visible, though not all were statistically significant.

Growth Performance
- Green zone crops exhibited stronger growth scores, particularly for varieties like Vixen and Calibre wheat.
- Red zone crops showed slower development, likely due to environmental constraints.
- Wheat varieties reached key growth stages earlier in green zones, supporting the importance of favourable conditions.

Temperature Impact
- Red zones experienced significantly lower nighttime temperatures, with some areas dropping below -2°C.
- Green zones had more stable temperatures, contributing to improved growth.
- Temperature extremes likely affected yield performance, reinforcing the need for adaptive strategies

See the full results in our UNFS Annual Results Compendium.... coming soon!

This trial was possible due to the support of The South Australian Grain Industry Trust (SAGIT) and co-funding from GRDC.

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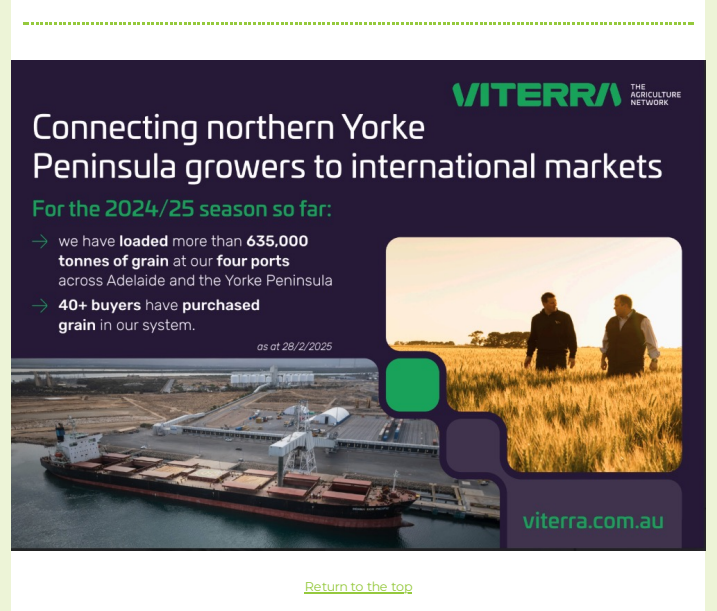

VITERRA THE AGRICULTURE NETWORK

Connecting northern Yorke Peninsula growers to international markets

For the 2024/25 season so far:

- we have **loaded** more than **635,000 tonnes of grain** at our **four ports** across Adelaide and the Yorke Peninsula
- **40+ buyers** have **purchased grain** in our system.

as at 26/2/2025

viterra.com.au

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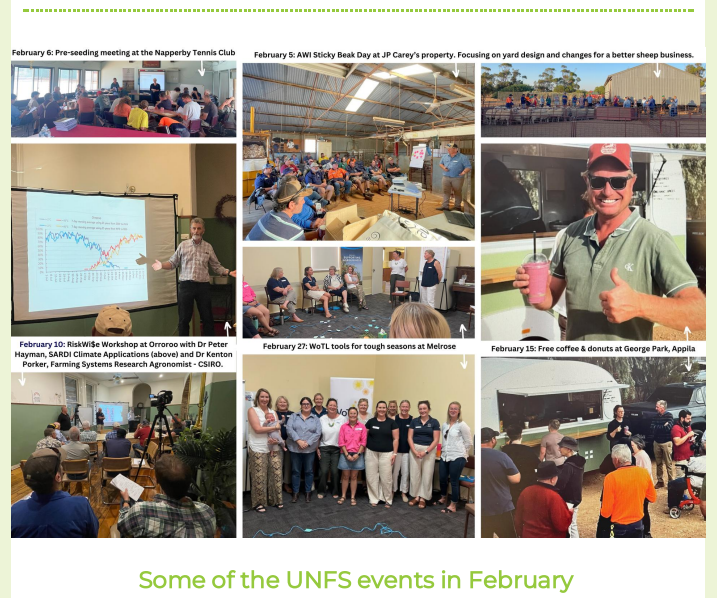

February 8: Pre-seeding meeting at the Napperby Tennis Club
February 5: AWI Sticky Beak Day at JP Carey's property. Focusing on yard design and changes for a better sheep business.
February 10: RiskWi$e Workshop at Orroroo with Dr Peter Hayman, SARDI Climate Applications (above) and Dr Kenton Porker, Farming Systems Research Agronomist - CSIRO.
February 27: WoTL tools for tough seasons at Melrose
February 25: Free coffee & donuts at George Park, Appila

### Some of the UNFS events in February

We have had a busy start to the year, with many events happening across the region. Our events for our members and the broader agricultural community have been both educational and social, with strong interest and positive feedback.

If you would like to attend a UNFS event, have a look at our past and future events on our website using the button below.

View all of the UNFS past and future events

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## LIVESTOCK

### Vitamin and mineral supplementation in the dry

Emma Shattock, Elders Livestock Production

In most grazing enterprises in South Australia, summer consistently represents a gap in both the quality and quantity of feed available. At this time, it is also common for vitamin and mineral supply to be below that required by stock, emphasising the need for supplementation. Feeding out grain and roughages rations can further complicate the issue by exacerbating nutrient imbalances.

A prime example of such an imbalance is calcium, as ewes reach lambing and lactation, her calcium requirements increase significantly. If this need cannot be met by daily intake alone, reserves are mobilised from the bones to help meet demand. Autumn lambing ewes will often be fed cereal grains in the lead up to lambing to help meet energy requirements, a feed that is notoriously low in calcium. If we have been undersupplying calcium to the ewes throughout their pregnancy, they will not have the reserves required to meet peak demand. The result is hypocalcaemia, otherwise known as milk fever, and can lead to ewe and lamb loss.
This effect is exacerbated in containment situations where the lack of access to grazing and reliance on grain further amplifies the deficiency. Calcium supplementation is a must in these situations.

The low calcium levels of cereal grain relative to phosphorus can also lead to urinary calculi in wethers and rams. Over time, excess phosphorus forms deposits in the bladder, developing into stones that can block the flow of urine and lead to the death of the animal.
Vitamin A is another good example a nutrient that can be in short supply over summer. This vitamin is found in good levels in green pasture but is generally deficient in dry feed. Stores from the liver can help meet the animal's demand initially, but as time progresses supplementation becomes important. With important roles in immunity, fertility and growth, deficient animals become a lot more susceptible to disease.

While disease prevention is important, well-matched supplementation can also help to improve digestion and production. Dry pasture can be very high in fibre and low in energy and protein. Supplementation with a nitrogen source, such as a protein meal or urea, can help to improve appetite and the digestion of this feed in the rumen. This improves daily nutrient supply from the feed the animal is ingesting. Sulphur is also needed to help with this process.

Urea must be fed with caution as toxicity can occur in some situations. Do not allow water to pool on or around supplements containing urea and avoid feeding it to starving or thirsty sheep. Other restrictions exist so it is recommended to seek advice for the safest ways to provide urea.
Supplementation with essential vitamins and minerals can improve the health, digestion and production of sheep on dry feed. The examples given above are only a few of many of the vitamins and minerals to consider. Some of these can be quite region specific while others extend to most situations. The best advice is to speak with your sheep production consultant or nutritionist to find the supplement but suited to your and production goals.

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### Effectively feeding ewes for the coming months

Deb Scammell, Talking Livestock

Following the difficult season experienced by many producers in 2024, unfortunately, we still have a long way to go in maintaining ewes over joining and lambing.
Paddock feed is starting to run out with dry pasture quantity becoming depleted in most areas. Stubbles unfortunately have not provided the usual feed reserves producers are accustomed to. Grain amounts were minimal, and stubble and leaf quantity is low in most areas due to lower than average crop heights and yields.

Before we talk about effectively feeding ewes for the coming months, it's worth thinking about 'who' in the flock is worth feeding. This is the perfect time to look at culling any poor performers or ewes which aren't fit to join or carry a lamb. For any spring lambers you can go through the 'fit to join' process which is a series of checks to work out which ewes are the best to cull pre-joining. Even if ewes have been recently joined, you can cull any ewes that aren't worth the cost to keep feeding through (i.e. conformation, age, udder deformities, previous mastitis issues etc and any eID reproduction data if available). We're still looking at potentially 4 + months to get ewes through to the next lot of green feed so it's worth looking at ewes as individuals and sorting out who are the best performers in your flock.

When looking at feeding ewes it's worth considering minimum feed on offer targets and ground cover targets to determine if ewes are going to be better fed in a containment area or sacrifice paddock. This can enable you to look after the paddocks over the rest of your farm. Feeding stock can also be easier and less time consuming when stock are locked up as they are all in one area. They also walk off less energy than when they are in larger paddocks.

As most ewes are currently joined, it's crucial to meet minimum protein and energy requirements over the next few months so you can maintain condition score of breeding stock.
Whether ewes are locked up, in sacrifice paddocks or still grazing dry feed, they are likely to need some supplement over the next few months as they get further into pregnancy. If you still have some dry pasture you can top up energy requirements using cereal grains like barley, oats or wheat (being careful with starch introduction). You can also use full feed pellets to meet requirements. If ewes are locked up, it's important to include fibre in their diet as ruminants require fibre for effective rumen function. Fibre in a ration is measured as NDF (Neutral Detergent Fibre) which is the digestible fibre, as a minimum a ewe should have at least 30% NDF in the overall ration.

As the new season's cereal hay in most cases is so low in fibre, ewes are going to be able to consume a huge amount, often more than they require. You may need to ration out 2024 hay to make sure they are not overconsuming energy but still getting daily fibre requirements.

If you can access straw, even at higher dollar value this year, straw and barley is still the most economical and easiest way to feed ewes in early pregnancy. If ewes are locked up, it is critical to formulate rations that meet daily energy requirements. Ewes must also be condition scored regularly and if possible 'skinnies' separated off and fed separately as there is a large variance in condition score in most mobs this year after a tough season. Scanning for singles and multiples also allows accurate nutrition to be provided to ewes more effectively.

Image: Sheep Connect SA

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### Feeding ewes to avoid health issues this season

Deb Scammell, Talking Livestock

Due to the prolonged dry period, we've been experiencing, there are a few things to think about when we look at supplementary feeding ewes and lambs over the coming months. The cereal hay this year is quite low in fibre and in most cases has high energy and protein. Due to the dry and short growing season in a lot of areas, the hay crops didn't reach their usual height, meaning they didn't develop their normal fibre content when they were cut. This hay is ideal when you are needing higher energy in rations, however it is not going to work as well feeding ewes in early pregnancy when ewes are locked up with a moderate maintenance energy requirement.

When we look at a feed test of hay and look at fibre content, we look at NDF (Neutral Detergent Fibre). The average NDF of 2024 cereal hay has been in the range of 47 – 50%. As a comparison, straw is often around 70% NDF and 2022 hay on average had an NDF of 65% plus. The fibre level determines how much an animal can ingest in a day.

When feeding ewes locked up in containment or sacrifice paddocks, straw can be fed ad-lib and the higher fibre content will often restrict intake to around 1 – 1.2kg/ewe/day. If you offer 2024 cereal hay ad-lib, ewes are likely to eat around 1.7 – 1.8kg /ewe/day meaning they are going to get around 18MJ of energy which is significantly more than their daily energy requirement (11MJ energy/day for maintenance for a 70kg Standard reference weight merino ewe).

This makes feeding difficult as 2024 hay is either going to have to be rationed out or more fibrous hay or straw utilised in early pregnancy if possible. Providing excess energy for an extended period will allow ewes to become too fat during pregnancy which can lead to an increased risk of lambing issues and ewe mortality. The 2024 cut cereal hay is also very high in water soluble carbohydrates (WSC) which can have an impact on rumen function.

For ewes and lambs which are being supplemented with hay and grain, these feeds are usually calcium deficient and not balanced adequately for the 2:1 calcium to phosphorus ratio needed. It's important to supplement ewes with calcium anytime they are on cereal feeds to enable them to have plenty of bone calcium reserves as they go into lambing. Growing lambs also need adequate calcium and a calcium: phosphorus ratio of at least 2: 1 in the overall ration to allow high growth rates when being fed cereal based grains. Full feed pellets often have good macro and micromineral levels to correct this balance.

If ewes and lambs haven't been on green feed for a long period of time, we also have to be careful of vitamin deficiencies. Vitamin A is produced by the conversion of carotene found in green, leafy forages. Deficiencies occur when stock are supplementary fed and haven't had access to green feed for a period of time especially in young stock.

Vitamin E is also found in green feeds, however, is poorly stored in the body so daily intake is required. If feeding hay or grain or grazing stubbles for an extended period of time, vitamin E supplementation may need to be considered also. Vitamin A and E can be supplemented in injectable form or daily in loose licks, blocks or within grain additive pellets. Good full feed pellets should also contain adequate levels of Vitamin A and E. It's important to meet daily energy requirements to enable a successful lambing result after a tough season, however a balance of fibre, minerals and vitamins is also critical to avoid health problems and make the long period of feeding worthwhile.

Image: Sheep Connect SA

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### Sheep and goat eID requirements for SA producers

All sheep and farmed goats born from 1 January 2025 must be identified with a National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) accredited electronic breeder tag (eID) before leaving their property of birth.

Older animals, such as ewes, don't need to be eID tagged yet – this will commence from 1 January 2027.

The main change for many producers is using electronic tags instead of visual tags to identify their lambs and kids. It is important to make sure:

- eID tags are NLIS accredited
- The correct species tags have been ordered (sheep or goats)
- Only one eID tag is applied per animal.

For producers who bring sheep and goats onto their property directly from another property (P2P movements), there will be a few more things to consider such as if they will need scanning equipment and knowing how to complete individual animal transfers on the NLIS database.

Producers must record individual movements of sheep and goats tagged with eID on the NLIS database if they conduct P2P movements, such as:

- Moving stock between multiple PICs, even if you own both properties
- Moving stock onto your property for agistment
- Buying stock privately (with or without an agent)
- Buying stock via an online platform (such as Auctions Plus or Farm Gate).

If you are unsure how to upload eID tag data to the NLIS database, you can access "How to" guides available on the NLIS eID website.

Producers are not required to scan and record individual stock movements if they:

- Buy or sell at a saleyard – this responsibility will lie with the saleyard operator
- Buy at a public auction – this responsibility will lie with the selling agent
- Consign to a processor – this responsibility will lie with the processor.

Eligible producers can apply for a 75% rebate on the cost of purchasing essential equipment needed to conduct P2P movements and meet NLIS reporting obligations. The maximum rebate amount is determined by the average head movement onto your property over 3 consecutive years (between 2021 and 2024).

You can subscribe to updates here.

Learn more about SA's sheep and goat eID implementation and support

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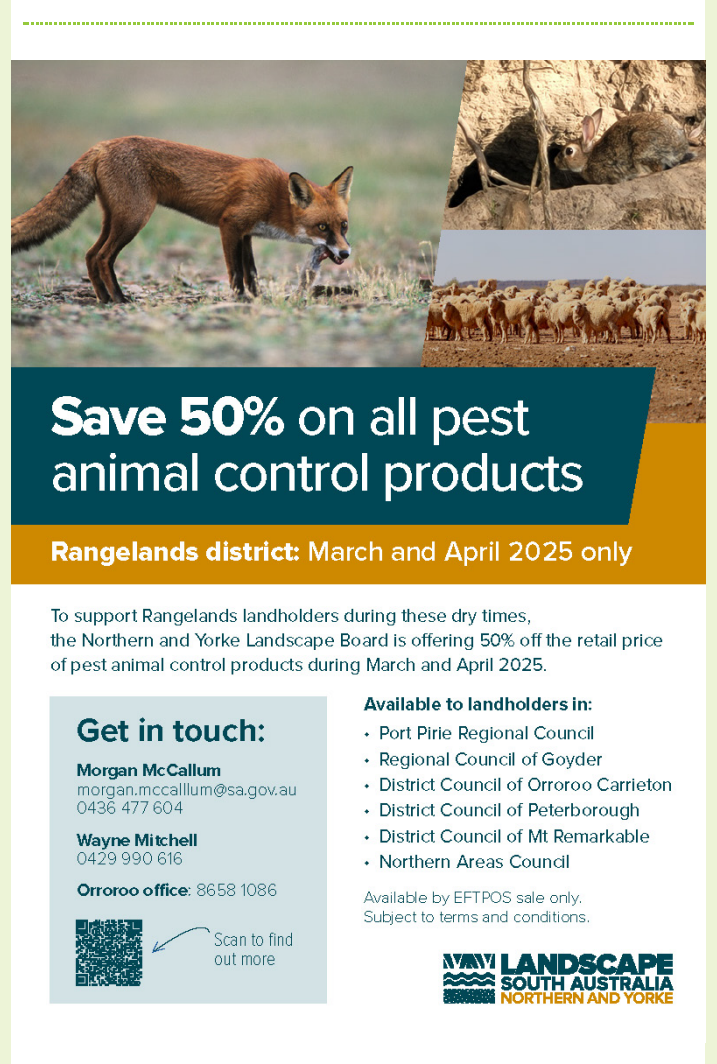

**Save 50% on all pest animal control products**

**Rangelands district:** March and April 2025 only

To support Rangelands landholders during these dry times, the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board is offering 50% off the retail price of pest animal control products during March and April 2025.

**Get in touch:**

**Morgan McCallum**
morgan.mccallum@sa.gov.au
0436 477 604

**Wayne Mitchell**
0429 990 616

**Orroroo office:** 8658 1086

Scan to find out more

**Available to landholders in:**

- Port Pirie Regional Council
- Regional Council of Goyder
- District Council of Orroroo Carrieton
- District Council of Peterborough
- District Council of Mt Remarkable
- Northern Areas Council

Available by EFTPOS sale only.
Subject to terms and conditions.

LANDSCAPE SOUTH AUSTRALIA NORTHERN AND YORKE

### 50% saving on all pest animal control products

From 1 March to 30 April 2025, the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board is offering a 50% discount on all pest animal control products in the Rangelands district.

Learn More

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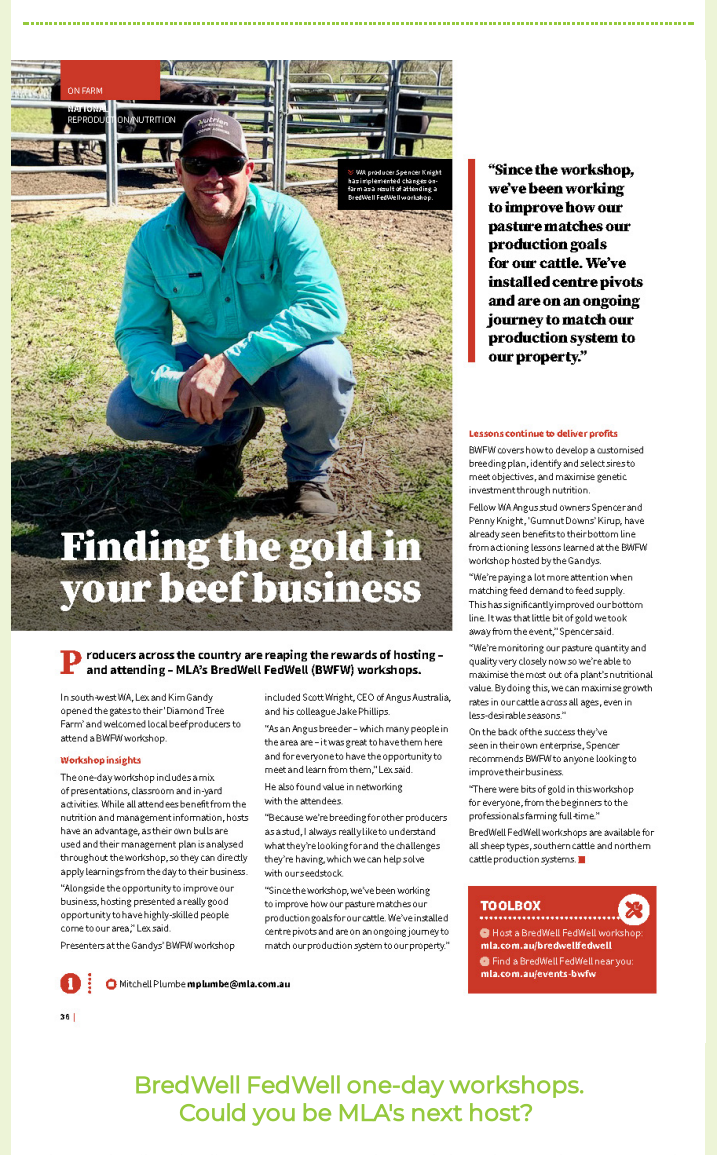

**Finding the gold in your beef business**

**Producers across the country are reaping the rewards of hosting – and attending – MLA's BredWell FedWell (BWFW) workshops.**

"Since the workshop, we've been working to improve how our pasture matches our production goals for our cattle. We've installed centre pivots and are on an ongoing journey to match our production system to our property."

TOOLBOX

Host a BredWell FedWell workshop: mla.com.au/bredwellfedwell

Find a BredWell FedWell near you: mla.com.au/events-bwfw

Mitchell Plumbe mplumbe@mla.com.au

### BredWell FedWell one-day workshops. Could you be MLA's next host?

The BredWell FedWell program is a one-day workshop showing how improved breeding and feeding can boost farm productivity. This workshop now includes the latest insights on genetics and nutrition.

Read more about hosting benefits

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Rachel Trengove, Anna Collins, Barry Mudge, Deb Warner, Allan Parker OAM, Molly O'Dea and Paul Rodgers

### Allan Parker regional brain reset tour

Upper North Farming Systems were fortunate to be subsidised by Northern and Yorke Landscape Board and GRDC's RiskWi$e project to bring Allan Parker's 'Regional Brain Reset Tour' to the Mid North in February.

At the Jamestown event, we discovered some essential steps to a brain reset, to increase concentration, memory and composure under pressure. All of which lead to enhanced mental wellbeing, improved quality of life and greater control over our stress levels.

Some key messages from Allan's book *Would Could Might – the Art and Science of Speculative Thinking*:

- Remember the essentials: hydration, oxygen, nutrition, sleep, exercise, compassionate communication, diverse social interaction and listening, facilitates overall well-being.
- Adapt a fresh mindset, deeply listen, read, and write, learning through experimentation and realising insights.
- Transition from fixing issues to co-creating based on real and collective needs and generating multiple options for each need.
- Make your emotional, mental and physical state of being, a conscious choice constantly.
- Overcome procrastination by prioritising completion and acknowledging lessons learned.
- Be on time, do on time, do what you say you will do - keep your word - no excuses.
- Organise life with activities, brain-changing exercises and opportunities for observation, reflection, refinement, and heightened awareness.
- Pursue diverse and continuous improvement methods and watch your brain grow and expand.
- During times of uncertainty or distress, prioritise gratitude, kindness and love.
- Treat life as a continuous experiment with curiosity, exploration and fascination.
- No matter what happens, learning is always there.

Learn more about Allan Parker

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### Dry sowing in the Mid North - Season 2024 and learnings from the lack of rainfall

Michael Eyres and Edward Scott, Field Systems Aus

The 2024 season challenged farmers due to the lack of rainfall and the consequences that typically follow low or no-rainfall cropping years. Effective soil management is key to maximising crop performance. A deeper understanding of the soil-plant continuum has shaped the development of dry sowing techniques, including their risks, challenges, and potential benefits. Every farmer approaches dry sowing differently, and knowledge in this area has grown rapidly through collaboration and transparency. Ideally, crops would always be sown into soil with sufficient moisture, but that isn't a reality every season. To progress forward and learn from the dry season, we need to reflect on the decisions, and areas of success and failure throughout 2024.

Photo: ABC News "(Supplied: Andre Eylward)"

Read the full article on UNFS website

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### AWI Sticky Beak Day at Booleroo Centre

UNFS hosted an AWI Extension Sticky Beak Day at JP Carey's farm at Booleroo Centre in February. The event featured Ben White from the Kondinin Group, who discussed various sheep yard design options and their benefits, and Nathan Scott of Achieve Ag Solutions offering guidance on making informed flock structuring decisions and a hands-on masterclass in condition scoring ewes.

**Ben White – sheep yard design**
Ben White, an agricultural engineer with knowledge of sheep yard design, shared tips for creating yards that benefit both operators and sheep. His key messages emphasised that yards should be functional, low-stress environments for animals, and tailored to the operator's needs. Key takeaways included:

**Fit for Purpose Yards:** Yards should be practical, ensuring ease of operation and low-stress handling for sheep.

**Yard Covering Considerations:** Yard covers must be wide enough to avoid shadows in the main working areas, which can cause sheep to baulk.

**Site Selection:** Pay attention to soil type and slope to ensure proper drainage and avoid creating muddy conditions. Sheep are naturally inclined to run uphill and into the wind, so as a rule of thumb, designing yards to suit this behaviour can improve efficiency. That said, there are examples where a slight downhill gradient can work.

**Lead Up Race:** A lead up race is vital for smoothly integrating a sheep handler into existing yards. Ideally constructed with blank panels and in a curved shape leading into the race, it should not be too wide—especially for those working alone, as it can prevent sheep from turning back.

**Mid-Race Gates:** These are particularly useful when working with smaller sheep like lambs.

**Designing for Flexibility:** A bugle design remains a good option, and integrating inter-pen diamonds into the yard design can work well. Personal access gates strategically placed will reduce unnecessary climbing and should swing in the direction the sheep are moving. Also, consider rollers at angled pinch points to keep sheep moving.

**Make changes:** Don't be afraid to get the angle grinder out and make changes if your yards are not working well for you.
When deciding to invest in upgrading existing yards or erecting new yards, design is fundamental, it's a good idea to go and look at yards on operations on a similar scale.

Its best to be there when sheep are running through the yards and ask questions of the operator about what has worked well and what they would have changed if they had their time to design their yards again.

**Nathan Scott – Condition scoring demonstration session summary**

**Nathan's session highlighted the key benefits and positive impacts of condition scoring including:**

- Joining results
- Lamb survival
- Lamb growth rates through lactation
- Overall ewe health

For optimal results, producers should aim for a condition score of 3 for single-bearing ewes and 3.3 for multiple-bearing ewes. The best times to condition score ewes are during other handling activities such as weaning, pre-joining, pregnancy scanning, and lamb marking. Nathan encouraged producers to make it a habit of checking CS of ewes each time sheep are in the yards rather than adding it as a separate task. Condition scoring is your friend as it helps you to avoid surprises!

Nathan guided participants through a hands-on condition scoring session, helping attendees to better understand the nuances of scoring ewes accurately. Participants were tasked with assigning coloured pegs to ewes in a race, based on their condition scores, sparking great discussion and learning. Nathan set out to have producers talking in 0.1of a condition score increments to achieve greater accuracy, which he successfully achieved during his session. If our aim is to work in 0.1 of a condition score increments, and you are a couple increments different to the next person, then the outcomes won't be dramatically different in the sheep. If however we work in whole, or half condition score increments, and you are a couple of increments different to the next person then the results could be dramatically different within the sheep's performance. Nathan's quick pointers were to start with finger tips touching the spine. If you can feel the spine at all – the ewe has to be under CS 4, if can't feel the spine –the ewe is over CS 4. If the ewes is under condition score 4, then it is important to be able to accurately identify her actual condition score. Determining whether a ewe is above and below CS 3 is the crucial skill as it can have a dramatic impact upon her health and performance.

**A guide to condition scoring:**

- Finger tips on the spine – can you feel her spine easily?
- Feel down over the top of the short ribs feeling the shape of that fat and muscle.
- Feel the end of the ribs – can you feel them easily? Can you push between them

The following condition scoring guide has been developed by Nathan Scott (Achieve Ag Solutions) to help producers better understand the method of condition scoring in smaller increments, and is based upon the information provided by the Lifetime Wool Project.

| Condition Score | Description |
|---|---|
| 2.3 | Little cover over the top of short ribs. Just possible to feel each rib through muscle on top of short ribs.<br>Ends of ribs are easily felt and possible to push between them |
| 2.5 | Heavily concaved shape muscle/fat between spine and end of ribs.<br>Ends of short ribs can be felt and possible to push between them |
| 2.7 | Concave shape muscle/fat between spine and end of ribs, but with some cover over the top of short ribs.<br>Ends of ribs can just be felt, but with some cover over them. |
| 3 | Good cover over top of short ribs, with a flat shape from beside the spine to the end of the short ribs. Ends of ribs are well covered, with individual ribs only just being able to be felt. |
| 3.3 | The start of a convex shape to muscle/fat over top of short ribs. Ends of short ribs well covered, difficult to feel individual ribs. |
| 3.5 | Convex shape indicating good cover of muscle and fat over top of short ribs. Ends of ribs very well covered |
| 3.7 | Fully rounded cover over short top of ribs.<br>Only just able to feel spine. |
| 4 | Spine is now disappearing. Difficult to feel at all. Very round all over |

This guide starts at condition score 2.3, as lighter than this presents significant animal health and performance challenges. It also finishes at condition score 4, as it is incredibly difficult to differentiate above condition score 4, and also provide little practical benefit in terms of outcomes. Below 2.3 and she is far too skinny, above 4 and she is too fat. That is about as much as you need to know outside of the descriptions above.

The Sticky Beak events were proudly supported by funding from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund, the Government of South Australia, Livestock SA, and Australian Wool Innovation Extension SA.

Thank you to UNFS members, JP and Nic Carey for hosting the day.

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Formed in 2001, the Upper North Farming Systems (UNFS) Group conducts research trials and provides extension and networking opportunities for farmers, agronomists, researchers and primary industry.

The UNFS Group covers a diverse geographical area in the Upper North Region of South Australia. The region is bordered to the north and east by the pastoral zones and extends south to the higher rainfall zones and encompasses the towns of Booleroo Centre, Crystal Brook, Hallet, Jamestown, Laura, Peterborough, Nelshaby, Orroroo, Quorn and Wilmington.

The group aims to undertake regular events for its members and the broader agricultural community in the region including workshops, crop walks and Hub events. The feature event on the calendar is the annual member's expo. In 2025 this will be a Grain Automate Expo held at Melrose Showgrounds and delivered by SPAA and UNFS.

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