



## Grain & Graze Email Newsletter - April 2007

This E-bulletin comes at a crucial time for the Grain & Graze program, with fourth year milestone reports due over the coming weeks, new projects commencing on program evaluation and integrated product development, and prospects for an extension of activities into 2008-09.

For this reason, it is great to see regional and national projects releasing more products and information of use to mixed farmers. Some of these are outlined in this bulletin, with the promise of more to come.

As usual, I commend you to contact the regional coordinators and project leaders to discuss with them directly what they are doing for mixed farming systems in your region. And, of course, Gill and I always welcome a yarn with those interested in Grain & Graze and its benefits.

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## Around the Regions

### THE AVON

The Avon biodiversity project has compiled a summary of its initial findings from the autumn and spring monitoring. It provides a fantastic example of a Biodiversity in Grain & Graze regional project and can be viewed at [www.grainandgraze.com.au/Regions/Avon\\_Region/](http://www.grainandgraze.com.au/Regions/Avon_Region/)

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Feel free to forward this e-newsletter to your networks.

### Feedback

We welcome feedback and/or material for inclusion.

Please email: [grainandgraze@lwa.gov.au](mailto:grainandgraze@lwa.gov.au)

### Past Issues

Visit the Grain & Graze E-Newsletter page at [www.grainandgraze.com.au](http://www.grainandgraze.com.au) to see past issues.





## BORDER RIVERS

They burned the midnight oil, or almost did, at a biodiversity field day on the Brown family's Crowder's Creek property in Moonie on March 31.

Some 30 people looked at how Grain & Graze pasture research is being integrated with work on the structures and function of ecosystems in the Border Rivers component of the national Biodiversity in Grain & Graze (BiGG) program.

Initially the group looked at native and introduced pastures and their management, and heard a presentation from the Queensland Murray Darling Committee (QMDC) before taking off after dark on a spotlighting and trapping expedition, netting a good array of snakes, lizards and bats.

More than 50 people joined a Grain & Graze bus trip to Goondiwindi and Boomi, taking in splendid 18 month old pastures that matched species with soil type, and a demonstration of pasture seeders and Tilley harrows.

Speakers from QDPI&F and Pacific seeds talked about selection of oat varieties and their management, and the differences between rotations and set stocking were discussed. We saw another fine pasture, this time of Bambatsi panic, and heard from a local grazier about his cell grazing system that utilises water medication of his animals.

The Western Catchment Management Association discussed capping of bores and the importance of position in a water trough system.

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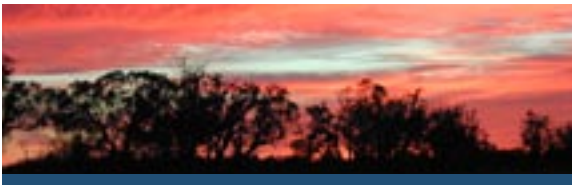
## CENTRAL WEST / LACHLAN

There have been scattered storms across the region, with some people getting quite wet, but we are still in need of good widespread rainfall to get the winter cropping season underway. There has been some tractor activity, with a handful of producers sowing early season oat crops and, more widely, people spraying weeds.

Our feed profiles model is getting close to completion, with a handful of farmer focus groups across the three rainfall zones planning to "roadtest" it in April/May.

The site at Wellington is being prepared for the third year of our Pasture Cropping trial, while another at Lake Cowell will be incorporated for the 2007 season, along with those already established at Trangie and Condobolin, to test the suitability of the system in different climatic and lower rainfall regions.

The ewes in our Alley Farming with Old Man Saltbush trial at Condobolin have been joined to Poll Dorset rams, with grain supplementation



beginning in late February. Stock in both the saltbush and non-saltbush comparison mobs are being periodically weighed, with those on saltbush showing a higher liveweight and fat score to date.

Finally, data collected in Spring 2006 for the regional biodiversity project has been entered into the national database ready for analysis and a final collection of data at all sites is planned for Spring 2007.

We have just produced a series of fact sheets around the theme of perennial pastures and the production, environment and landscape decisions that need to be considered in terms of management.

Topics include native perennial grasses, perennial species, introduced perennials, Old Man Saltbush and lucerne. They can be viewed at: [www.grainandgraze.com.au/Regions/Central\\_West\\_-\\_Lachlan/index.aspx](http://www.grainandgraze.com.au/Regions/Central_West_-_Lachlan/index.aspx) with free copies available from me on 02 6895 1015 or email [grain.graze@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:grain.graze@dpi.nsw.gov.au).

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## CORANGAMITE / GLENELG HOPKINS

Six areas of work have been analysed and written up:

- grazing cereals in winter (2 trials);
- sowing cereals into lucerne break crops;
- lambs grazing lucerne with supplements (last year's results as the dry prevented work this summer);
- the impact of stubble additives when given to stock grazing stubbles (they don't work); and
- two years of Integrated Pest Management surveying (results to be presented at the biodiversity workshop in Tasmania in June 2007).

Info: [www.grainandgraze.com.au/Regions/Corangamite-Glenelg](http://www.grainandgraze.com.au/Regions/Corangamite-Glenelg)

Cam Nicholson: [nicon@pipeline.com.au](mailto:nicon@pipeline.com.au) or phone 03 5258 3860.

## EYRE PENINSULA

The Eyre Peninsula Farming Systems Summary 2006 – one of EP Grain & Graze and EP Farming Systems major information transfer tools to get project work back to the community – has been distributed free to all EP farmers, farmers from other low rainfall areas (Salmon Gums, Upper North, Mallee, Condo etc), agribusiness, research personnel and funding bodies.

Despite the drought, it's still jam-packed with useful information ranging from risk management, grazing cereals, controlled traffic, plant





available water, suppressive soils, livestock management and other farming systems issues.

Copies and info: [Minnipa Agricultural Centre](http://Minnipa Agricultural Centre), 08 8680 5104.

Farmer group meetings across the Peninsula are now underway, at which harvest/research results and requested information is extended back to farmers, with group discussion about where particular technologies or practices may fit into local farming systems. (Much of the information discussed is in the EPFS Summary.)

At these meetings, farmers are invited to highlight barriers or opportunities in their farming systems, and provide feedback on the direction projects should take.



Feedback from the first five Farm Profitability workshops – a joint initiative by EP Grain & Graze and EP Farming Systems – has been very positive, with farmers ‘wishing they’d known this stuff a long time ago’ and promising to do follow-up work to fine tune their enterprise mixes and prepare financial plans accounting for major expenses like machinery replacement.

We’ll be offering the workshops to other groups after seeding.

There is renewed interest in grazing cereals to fill autumn feedgaps on upper EP and winter feedgaps on lower EP, but different management is required between the different rainfall zones with respect to crop type, variety and inputs, how the crop will finish, and where it fits in the rotation. Emma McInerney gave presentations at the GRDC update in Adelaide and the LEADA conference.

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## MALLEE

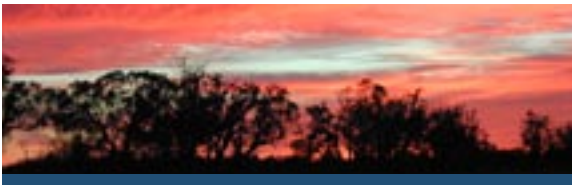
Making farm businesses more resilient and easier to manage was the focus of three “Mixed Farming Forums” in the region.

The G&G Mallee project hosted the forums for farmers and advisors as a platform for them to learn from each other’s knowledge about and experiences with farming businesses.

The forums highlighted the importance of better decision making with particular emphasis on the integration of cropping and livestock enterprises on mixed farms.

All forums aimed to expand on the existing knowledge of how to incorporate conservation farming practices and how to best to match livestock production with crop production for maximum farm profitability and sustainability in the Mallee region.





Nigel McGuckian, who is leading the G&G National Social project, facilitated the forums and focused on drawing out the experiences or 'stories' farmers had to tell about the complexities of managing mixed farming systems. A summary of the findings will be available shortly and make for very interesting reading. We will keep you posted.

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## MARANOA / BALONNE

Feed for cattle – in the paddock and in the feedlot – has been much of our focus in the Maranoa/Balonne G&G region in recent weeks, with:

- Sustainable Soil Nitrogen workshops at St George, Roma and Goondiwindi,
- Silage workshops (attended by a total 75 producers) at Roma and Condamine, and
- Nutrition EDGE workshops (with 29 farm businesses attending) at Rome and Condamine.

Even more workshops are on the drawing board in conjunction with the Border Rivers G&G region. .

Feedlots and the drought are driving the increased interest in silage and right now that interest coincides with winter crop planting and the challenge of matching nitrogen availability to the requirements of forage crops like oats, something that very few producers have done with forage in the past.

We had some 50 people at the workshops, though sadly very few of them are looking at soil moisture levels sufficient to expect a good forage crop. Nevertheless feedback on the workshops from participants has been very positive and they've been good for Grain & Graze in the region.

An issue that did emerge at the workshops was the likelihood of reduced levels of VAM (vesicular arbuscular mycorrhiza) in the soil because of drought induced "long fallow". Fortunately winter crops are not as dependent on adequate VAM as are summer ones.

We've also set up a series of soil characterisation sites, where we will compare cultivated and native vegetation soils for water holding capacity and other characteristics. Workshops and field days will be organised to these sites.

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## MURRUMBIDGEE

2006 results continue to be analysed, with some good results considering the season. Drought also continues though some summer storms have filled dams.

In 2007 we will include cattle in our Research & Development, looking for management strategies in grazing wheats, and continue to investigate the interactions of the MG & Na supplementary feeding of grazing winter wheats.

The year began with a Biodiversity field day on the Coolamon Focus Farm and a presentation from Bindi Vanzella, of Greening Australia, looking at bird species and revegetation.

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## NORTHERN AGRICULTURAL

Twenty agronomists and farm consultants attended a one day, interactive Grain & Graze forum. in Dongara last month, facilitated by Nigel McGuckian, who outlined his project 'social influences in mixed farming'. Delegates were given an overview and update of NAR G&G project work in the areas of perennial grasses, grazing cereals and matching feed supply and demand. Speakers included local researchers, farmers and project officers. A similar event is planned in 12 months time

Phil Barrett-Lennard: [pbl@consultag.com.au](mailto:pbl@consultag.com.au) or phone: 08 94750753

## BIODIVERSITY IN GRAIN & GRAZE (BIGG)

[The Biodiversity Workshop in Tassie](#)

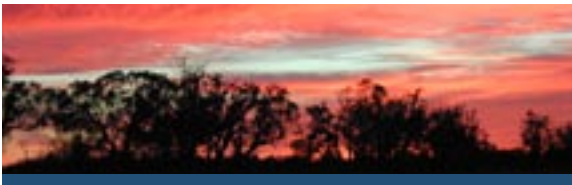
The BiGG (Biodiversity in Grain & Graze) workshop held recently in Tasmania was a great opportunity to catch up with what has been happening in all regions and to see some of the data, which has been collected from all sites, presented by specialists associated with the national biodiversity project at the University of Tasmania.

All were impressed to see the care taken in classifying the invertebrates, and how spatial data is being collated for the focus farms in all regions.

One of the challenges that became apparent during discussions was how the biodiversity data might relate to production and economic outcomes within Grain & Graze.

It was great to have Gupta Vadakattu and Jim Scott there to discuss big picture issues. Presentations from the regions on the first day gave everyone an opportunity to appreciate similarities and differences between regions.





Murrumbidgee have created [five fact sheets](#) on birds identified during their bird surveys. Avon region have sent a copy of their newsletter outlining the progress of the BiGG project. Other regions will be holding field days in the near future, which will provide opportunities to discuss the preliminary results from the surveys.

Thank you very much to Dave Green and Clancy Carver who did most of the organising and thanks to Richard (Price of course) for facilitating sessions.

And finally, we are convening a symposium at the Ecological Society of Australia's annual conference in Perth in November this year.

Grain & Graze will provide sponsorship for the event and we are hoping for a good turn out of BiGG scientists to present research from the national biodiversity project and from regional projects. See you there.

Project Coordinator Dr Kerry Bridle: [kerry@utas.edu.au](mailto:kerry@utas.edu.au) or phone (03) 6226 2837/0427 846 050.

## A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE BIGG WORKSHOP

Hobart was the setting for a gathering of diverse individuals working on Biodiversity in Grain and Graze. It marked the first twelve months of data collection and the time for initial interpretation of results.

The workshop proved to be a worthwhile benchmarking opportunity. It allowed time for members to gauge where improvements can be made by farmer and researcher.

The level of data collected has not been attempted on a national scale before. All parties involved in collating the results are excited by the challenge and the potential of finding unnamed species of plants, insects and soil biota.

It is anticipated that the information gathered can be used to anticipate the level of impact growers have via their various farming practices on biodiversity, both positive and negative.

Quality of results relies on all members of the program using the same technique. This can prove difficult given the distance and environmental differences between the nine regions.

These challenges were accepted by the group whose collective thoughts were 'nothing is impossible' despite the demands of time and travel.

Quality can be improved, insects in particular, as insects do not enjoy being left for long periods in the heat in small sealed containers with less than adequate preservative.

I came away from the meeting knowing that I have some improvements to make in my sampling technique.





I also gained a greater understanding of the value of farmer interviews. The interviews provide the information of whole farm management practice.

If we are going to influence the beneficial insects during our crop phase of the rotation we need to know the practice most likely to achieve this. Not only the management practice in improving beneficials, but the quality of remnant required to do so.

The BiGG project is attempting to answer some of the larger questions of the farming system by measuring more than one aspect of the system. I am excited to be part of it.

Wayne Parker, BiGG Development Officer, Northern Ag Region WA:  
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## An Update from the National Partners - AWI Ltd, GRDC, LWA, MLA

### GRAINS RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The "Agronomy after the Drought" manual is available online at:  
[www.grdc.com.au/growers/res\\_upd/south/agdrought07.pdf](http://www.grdc.com.au/growers/res_upd/south/agdrought07.pdf)

The GRDC's Research Update Podcasts are a new web-based initiative to provide technical information for grain growers, including updates on research, trials, new varieties, farmer activities and case studies.

This series of interviews can be accessed at [www.grdc.com.au/Podcast/main.htm](http://www.grdc.com.au/Podcast/main.htm) and include some of the key considerations growers will need to watch in 2007 following the recent drought.

- Part 1 - Managing diseases after the drought
- Part 2 - Soil nutrition
- Part 3 - Chemical carryover
- Part 4 - Understanding stored nitrogen.

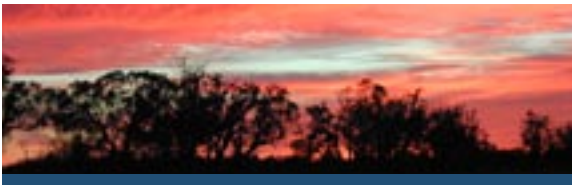
### LAND & WATER AUSTRALIA

New product: Principles for Riparian Lands Management - Best-practice knowledge for riparian lands.

Synthesising the results of the National Riparian Lands R&D Program, and including external and overseas research, 'Principles' is an essential guide to the science of riparian lands management.

Written with a national scope, this publication helps groups and landholders to design and implement best-practice riparian management. Visit [www.lwa.gov.au](http://www.lwa.gov.au) to order or download Principles of Riparian Lands Management.





## AUSTRALIAN WOOL INNOVATION LTD

AWI Ltd. and MLA are planning a series of workshops to provide sheep producers with practical ways in which to rebuild their flock, pastures and business returns following drought. The first workshop was held in Parkes NSW on March 29, with others planned for:

- Jamestown SA - Monday 16 April
- Ararat VIC - Wednesday 18 April
- Corowa NSW - Friday 27 April

For details about these events visit: [www.wool.com.au/Events/Woolgrower\\_Forum/2007\\_Forum/page\\_\\_7475](http://www.wool.com.au/Events/Woolgrower_Forum/2007_Forum/page__7475)



## MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA - MONEY MAKING MERINOS EDGENETWORK WORKSHOP

If you are getting back into merinos or looking to improve productivity, the Money Making Merinos Edgenetwork workshop is available.

The workshop assists commercial merino growers in using Sheep Genetics Australia (SGA) information to improve their flock's productivity.

Contact Liz Anschaw, EDGEnetwork National Coordinator on 1800 993 343 for assistance in running the workshops in your region. Be sure to explain that it is a Grain & Graze inquiry.



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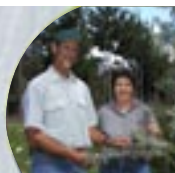
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For any other Grain and Graze  
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- n [www.grainandgraze.com.au/  
About\\_Us/Contact\\_Us/index.aspx](http://www.grainandgraze.com.au/About_Us/Contact_Us/index.aspx)

## National Grain & Graze Events - 2007

### The 2007 National Forum ~ August 14-16 2007

Hosted by the Murrumbidgee region in Wagga Wagga, NSW.

Key Grain & Graze projects in the region include evaluation of grazing wheats and short term pastures and their role in filling the feed gap in mixed farming systems and grazing cereals.

Focus farms monitor and measure the impact of mixed farming systems on production and natural resource management and a communication program aims to engage at least 1,500 producers in Grain & Graze related activities.

For more information go to [www.grainandgraze.com.au](http://www.grainandgraze.com.au)

### National Research & Development Forum - 1 and 2 May '07

For researchers involved in the Grain & Graze Program. The Border Rivers region will be hosting this event in Moree.

The forum gives Grain & Graze researchers the opportunity to showcase their work and interact with their peers.

For regional Grain and Graze events go to [www.grainandgraze.com.au](http://www.grainandgraze.com.au)

