

Waratah Fencing, Murrumbidgee Landcare Cross Property Planning Project and Tarcutta Valley Landcare group would like to extend this invitation to you to attend a Waratah fencing demonstration with Neville Prince.

WHERE:

Peter Sykes' Property
"Rylands"
Downfall Road
Humula

WHEN:

Wednesday, 13th May 2015
10.00am start followed by BBQ lunch



Practical demonstrations will include:

- Tips and tricks for straining and tying off wire
- Alternative fencing solutions
- Labour saving ideas
- New products

RSVP:

Please RSVP by Friday 8th May to:
Jacinta Christie - MLI Cross Property Planning
Project Coordinator on 0431 953 778

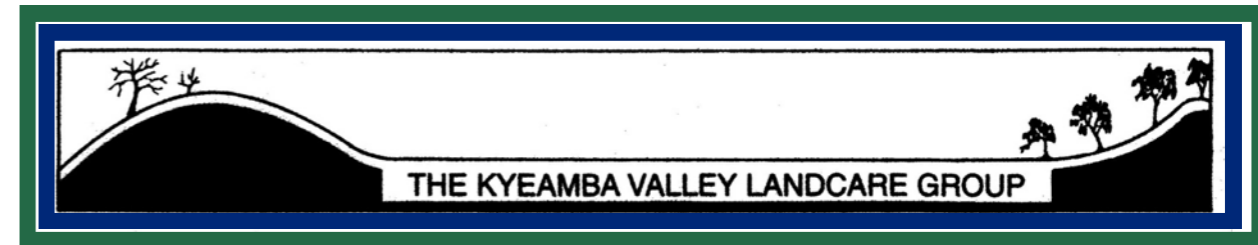


www.waratahfencing.com.au
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KYEAMBA VALLEY LANDCARE NEWSLETTER - Autumn 2015

Message from the Chairman

Peter Lawson - Chairman KVLG

In this autumn edition of the KVLG newsletter, we explore pasture cropping after our field day with Col Seis and Graeme Hand. These two have convened a few field days in our region over the past couple of years, one of which was at Humula last year.

Pasture cropping is a practice that has gained quite a following further north in the state, where summer rain is slightly more dominant. However, it is gaining some interest in our region as we continually look for ways to improve our feed situation and pasture base, ideally at a relatively low entry cost. The case study is on Len Ellis from Humula Station who shares his pasture cropping experience and results with us.

Our AGM dinner is on in May and we are fortunate to have Bill Gammage coming to present to us. He is an adjunct professor in the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University (ANU), researching Aboriginal land management at the time of contact (1788).

Amongst other books, Bill has written "The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines made Australia" (Allen and Unwin 2011) in which he discusses how the integrated management of the land by Aborigines created the vast grasslands and park-like environment that the early European settlers wrote about. We hope you can join us for what should be an interesting evening.

Autumn certainly arrived with a thud this year with good rain and cooler weather hitting us over the Easter weekend. Now all we need is for the rain to continue every couple of weeks, including the odd heavy shower for run-off in order to replenish those dams that have not been under storms thus far.

We wish you well for a great remainder of the year and let's hope that our growing season runs right the way through to October / November, commodity prices are high and you and your families have an enjoyable year.

Peter Lawson

**KVLG Annual General Meeting Wednesday 13th May 2013 @ 6.00pm
BILL GAMMAGE AS GUEST SPEAKER AT THE THOMAS BLAMEY TAVERN**

This year our AGM Guest Speaker will be Bill Gammage, Adjunct Professor in the Humanities Research Centre at ANU. He will be giving a talk based on his book *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines made Australia*. Bill grew up in Wagga, and studied history at ANU. He has taught at ANU, and at both the Universities of PNG and Adelaide. His book, which won the Prime Minister's Prize for Australian History in 2012, takes a fresh look at how Europeans saw Australia in the early days of settlement, and the existing Aboriginal land management practices. This talk will present a completely different perspective and context in which to think about how we currently manage our land. Our AGM will start at 6.00pm with dinner commencing at 6.30pm.



A delicious two course meal will be included on the night ... **KVLG members—\$15 Non members—\$25**
RSVP by Monday 11th May to Mardi Pillow 69281321/0428 692813 or email mpillow@bigpond.com



The Kyeamba Valley Landcare Group is grateful for the support of Beyond Bank Australia in printing their newsletters.

Pasture cropping boosts feed at Humula

By Bundle Lawson

Pasture cropping is a technique of sowing crops into living perennial (usually native) pastures and having these crops grow symbiotically with the existing pastures.

Since the 1990s, Colin Seis has been perfecting this technique and achieving significant environmental health benefits and yields from the cereal crops.

The original concept of pasture cropping was to sow crops into a dormant stand of summer growing (C4) native grass, like red grass. This was particularly appealing to for producers in summer-dominant rainfall areas, as a cereal crop such as oats could be grown without destroying the perennial pasture base, providing year-round stock feed.

However producers in South Australia, NSW and Victoria have also achieved good yields when sowing oats into winter-active (C3) perennial grass pastures, sparking an interest in pasture cropping among southern producers.

Local experience

Humula Station property manager Len Ellis decided to experiment with pasture cropping during 2014, with the aim of increasing the paddock feed available for steers so they could be run through to feedlot weights.

The 890 hectare property is run as a beef breeding operation, turning off about 350 steers each year.

The property has an average annual rainfall of 32 inches (800mm), with a slight winter-spring dominance.



Col Seis and Len taking questions at last years Practicalities of Pasture Cropping Workshop—15th July 2014

“We started pasture cropping last year really just to boost pasture production, rather than with the aim of harvesting the cereal crop for grain,” Len said.

“We also hoped it would improve soil health in some of our more run down pasture paddocks.

Sowing techniques

“In mid-March 2014, we planted a mix of annual species into 80 hectares of phalaris and clover-based pastures.

“The mix included Bimbil oats at a rate of 60 kilograms per hectare, and a combination of Saia oats, winter ryegrass and various clover species at a total rate of 15 kg/ha.

“Rather than spraying out any of the paddocks before sowing, we instead used the stock on hand to heavily graze the paddocks, with the cattle grazing right up until the day the machine went in.

“We used a contractor to plant the mix using a disc machine, and all the pastures were sown with MAP fertiliser at a rate of 90 kg/ha. They were also sprayed at sowing with Talstar for Red Legged Earth Mite control.

Pasture performance

“The new pasture species established well after good autumn rain during 2014, and we were able to start grazing the first paddock after eight weeks with a mob of 300 steers.



Landholders discussing paddock options in a run down paddock

use some, just in much smaller quantities these days).

A big take-home message from the day was the maintenance of species-diverse pastures for improved health and quality of both stock and pastures alike, and establishing trials to learn from your land and livestock the most effective way to manage them.

You can find out more about Pasture Cropping at Col’s website: <http://www.pasturecropping.com/>

Graeme can be contacted via the Stipa Native Grasses Association: <http://www.stipa.com.au/>

If you’d like more information on improving soil health, you may like to borrow the DVD ‘Symphony of the Soil’ from Murrumbidgee Landcare – the office is manned Monday to Wednesday. <http://murrumbidgeelandcare.asn.au/>

Highlights from the Pasture Cropping field day

Photos courtesy of Kimberley Beattie, Katie Collins & Jerry Garner

LANDSCAPE GOAL

- ◆ More than 20 perennial grass species (*biodiversity*)
- ◆ Increase age & physical structure (*biodiversity*)
- ◆ Dense perennial grass sward (LFA)
- ◆ Moderate decomposing plant litter (*visible fungal attack*) (LFA)
- ◆ Increase mature perennial grass plants (*large bases*) (LFA)
- ◆ Springy soil surface (LFA)
- ◆ Surface roughness 8-25mm (LFA)



To learn how to “pasture crop” well we need to understand:

- ◆ Our farms should function as ecosystems
- ◆ Grassland function
- ◆ Soil structure and health
- ◆ Grazing management
- ◆ Weed management
- ◆ Soil nutrients (*Fertiliser*)
- ◆ Suitable seeding machinery
- ◆ Multi species ‘pasture cropping’
- ◆ Vertical stacking of enterprises



If you increase landscape function and perennial diversity it is IMPOSSIBLE

not to increase:

- ◆ Biodiversity
- ◆ Soil Health
- ◆ Soil Carbon
- ◆ Lower Cost



Low input pasture management & pasture cropping workshop report

By Kimberley Beattie

On 16 March 22 people gathered in the wool shed at 'Silver Springs' to hear Graeme Hand and Col Seis talk about sustainable low-input grazing management and pasture-cropping.



Graeme is a familiar face to many in this region, as he has held several workshops over the past few years on behalf of Stipa Native Grasses Association.

Graeme's talk centred around managing stock to ensure the ongoing health of both stock and pasture, without having to rely on inputs. He noted that there is not one 'rule' equally applicable to every grazing enterprise, or even paddock, and strongly advocated for graziers to run a set of small trials on their own properties to determine the best combination and length of grazing and rest periods to ensure pasture coverage can be sustained long-term and during hard seasons.

Graeme noted that many rotational grazing practises currently utilised do not allow for a long enough rest period, leading to gradual degradation of pastures over time. Graeme likewise stressed the importance of being aware of the earliest signs of stock health, such as where to look to notice rumen 'gut fill', as insufficient gut fill early on, if not addressed by improving access to feed, will lead to eventual decline in stock quality, even if they are in good nick at the time of observation.

He also emphasised the need for a balanced diet for maintaining livestock health, pointing out that too much of a good thing can actually lead to health problems.

Col Seis won the 2014 Bob Hawke Landcare Award for his pioneering work in pasture-cropping, a management technique he developed after realising that several generations of traditional cropping methods had led to a marked decline in quality and productivity on his family property 'Winona'.

The basic premise of pasture cropping is that annual crops are sown directly into pastures and grow while the pasture is dormant or has been suppressed by grazing and/or carefully applied selective herbicide use. This enables the same paddock to be utilised for both cropping and pasture, whilst maintaining year-round ground cover to reduce erosion, suppress weeds, and improve soil health.

Col has found that by combining species and retaining perennial ground cover he has improved the quality of his soil, and encouraged the development of mycorrhizal fungal associations, which help plants to access nutrients, thus decreasing his need to rely as heavily on fertiliser applications as he has in the past.

Maintaining a diverse perennial pasture also provides habitat for beneficial insects and spiders, so the long-term benefits of pasture cropping likewise include a decrease in the need for pesticides and herbicides.

Col advocates pasture cropping as a management technique that over time increases the resilience of the property to see through bad seasons and drought, whilst simultaneously reducing the need to spend your life buying and applying chemical inputs (although he does still



Pasture cropping boosts feed at Humula —continued

"The paddocks were grazed under a rotational system, with the steers staying in each paddock until there was about 1000 kg/ha of dry matter left.

"We top-dressed the paddocks with urea at a rate of 100 kg/ha after the second grazing in late July.

"Each paddock was grazed three times in the rotation until late September. The steers were sold during October at 12-14 months of age and weighing at least 450 kilograms. The average weight gain for the entire mob while they were grazing the pasture-cropped paddocks was 2.3 kilograms per head per day.

"Once the steers were sold, these pasture paddocks became part of the rotation for the breeding herd, as we didn't cut any hay or silage as the property was going on the market."

Into the future

Humula Station is now under new ownership, but on the strength of the performance of last year's pasture cropped paddocks, Len says they will be planting annual ryegrass into about 120 hectares of established pastures

which are predominantly phalaris and clover.

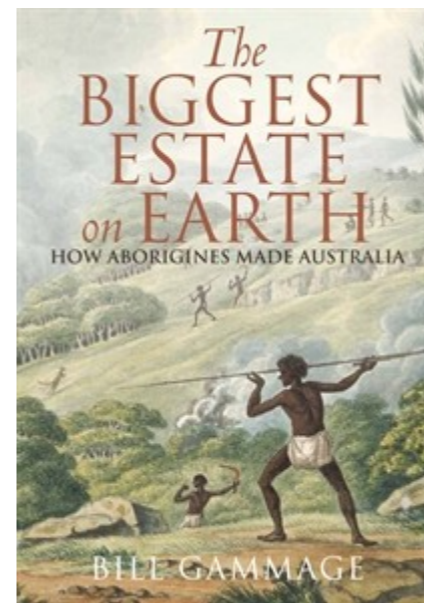
"I started planting winter ryegrass this year with a disc machine on the 8th April at a rate of 20 kg/ha.

"Fertiliser was spread at 150 kg/ha as a mix of single super, 0.025% Molybdenum and potash. Lime was also spread at a rate of 2.5 t/ha."



Humula Station

KVLG Guest Speaker—Bill Gammage: *The Biggest Estate on Earth (How Aborigines Made Australia)*



Book Review by Allen & Unwin

Across Australia, early Europeans commented again and again that the land looked like a park. With extensive grassy patches and pathways, open woodlands and abundant wildlife, it evoked a country estate in England. Bill Gammage has discovered this was because Aboriginal people managed the land in a far more systematic and scientific fashion than we have ever realised.

For over a decade, Gammage has examined written and visual records of the Australian landscape. He has uncovered an extraordinarily complex system of land management using fire and the life cycles of native plants to ensure plentiful wildlife and plant foods throughout the year. We know Aboriginal people spent far less time and effort than Europeans in securing food and shelter, and now we know how they did it.

With details of land-management strategies from around Australia, *The Biggest Estate on Earth* rewrites the history of this continent, with huge implications for us today. Once Aboriginal people were no longer able to tend their country, it became overgrown and vulnerable to the hugely damaging bushfires we now experience. And what we think of as virgin bush in a national park is nothing of the kind.

PROTECTING AND ENHANCING REMNANT NATIVE VEGETATION AT BOOK BOOK

An Update on the Cross Property Planning Project by Jacinta Christie, Project Co-ordinator

The cross property planning project commenced in 2013 and provides around 65 landholders funding for new native plantings and/or for the protection and enhancement of their existing native vegetation remnants. The Project extends throughout Kyeamba, Humula/Tarcutta and around Illabo, Bethungra and Junee.

In May 2014, I was invited to “Book Book Station”, a 1000 hectare property in the Kyeamba Valley owned and managed by Andrew Dunn and his father Robert, to discuss possible work that could be conducted on the property.

Areas of particular interest to both Andrew and Robert were the protection of their isolated mature paddock trees from cattle and the creation of a biodiverse dam and wetland area which also had a small patch of remnant vegetation. Paper work was completed and funding was provided in July 2014 for the protection of a number of paddock trees using cattle panels and for the fencing and re-vegetation of an existing dam.

I visited the property again in March this year and was pleased to see the progress that had been made towards the project objectives. A number of isolated paddock trees had been fenced to exclude stock, and fencing had been completed around a small native remnant in a paddock and also



Dam site in May 2014 pre-work



Post-work in March 2015 fully fenced

around the dam which also includes another small native remnant.

A range of tree and shrubs have been ordered for the dam site with planting expected to occur throughout June or July this year.

Andrew and Robert continue to consider more areas on the property that they can protect for conservation and biodiversity benefits in the future. I look forward to seeing the biodiverse dam come to life in the next 3 years of the project and continuing to work with them to achieve their goals.

If you would like more information about the cross property planning project please contact me on 0431 953 778 or jchristie@mli.org.au



Individual tree guards protecting isolated paddock trees from livestock

FOX CONTROL — Legally it’s time to get on board

Jacinta Christie—Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc

The European red fox is now a declared pest species in NSW. This means there is now a legal requirement for public land managers and private landholders to control foxes on their land.

Foxes are endemic across the Riverina LLS and assuming 4 foxes per square kilometre in a 5km radius of any farm-house there could be up to 312 foxes.

Senior Biosecurity Officer Toby O’Brien says the best way to comply with the new pest control order is to participate in a group control program.

“Participation in a group program is also the most cost effective way to reduce fox numbers.”

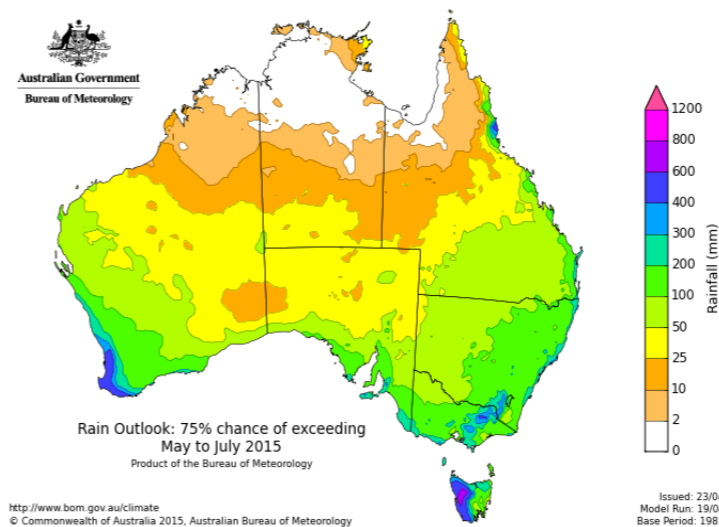
A Control group is where landholders get together and undertake fox control at the same time to reduce the population on a larger landscape scale, the more participants the more effective the scale.

These programs aim to ensure a maximum impact on fox populations and reduce the chance of re-invasion or immigration from other areas. 1080 baiting is the most effective way to reduce fox numbers.

Fee baits to Cross Property Planning Project landholders and subsidised baits to neighbours were delivered through the Riverina Local Land Services (LLS) throughout the area in March this year and it is hoped that baits can be offered again in spring. To register your interest in a fox baiting spring program please contact Jacinta Christie, Murrumbidgee Landcare on 0431 953778 or your local LLS Biosecurity Officers.



European Red Fox



CLIMATE OUTLOOK Courtesy of the Bureau of Meteorology

- May to July is likely to be wetter than normal over most of Australia, except for the tropical north and Tasmania.
- For May, large parts of the mainland are likely to be wetter than normal, while western Tasmania and isolated parts of the tropical north have an increased chance of drier conditions.
- For May to July, warmer than normal days are likely over the tropical north, southeast and far southwest of Australia. In contrast, cooler than

normal days are more likely in a large area from the northwest to central WA, extending across into western NSW.

- Night-time temperatures for the season are likely to be warmer than normal over most of Australia, except in the northwest WA, where there is no strong push towards warmer or cooler nights.
- The major climate influences for the season ahead are warmer than normal sea surface temperatures in the Indian Ocean and in waters surrounding much of the Australian coastline. In the tropical Pacific, the Bureau's climate model suggests El Niño is likely to develop over the coming one to two months.