

# western division news

# letter

Edition 142 ISSN 0314 - 5352

## New age wools: the short wools

By Sally Ware  
Livestock Officer  
NSW DPI Hay

Once known as 'prem' wools and seen as a sign of a 'last resort' management tool such as shearing early to control lice or flies, short wools are becoming 'new age'. Mark Bazeley, principal owner of the wool-broking business Riverina Wool, which has been based in Moama in southern NSW for the past 30 years, has been watching the change in demand from wool processors for these types of wools for a number of years. He is quietly optimistic that the future will see more, not less, of these wools listed in the sale catalogues. With a business that encompasses the sale of the wool from woolshed preparation to auctioning on the show floor in Melbourne, Mark is in constant contact with both clients and overseas buyers.

Short wools are roughly defined as fleece wools measuring between 55 and 75 mm in length (for medium micron wool), compared with an average of around 90+ mm for wool grown for about 10 to 12 months. The crucial point that Mark is telling his clients is that there is no price advantage in waiting 10 or more months for the wool to reach 90+ mm.



Woolbroker Mark Bazeley believes that short-fleece wools are the wool type of the future for western landholders. Mark owns Riverina Wool, based at Moama on the NSW-Victoria border. He is pictured here giving his annual wool-market outlook in the early morning on the bus during the Hay district Peppin-Shaw Riverina Ewe Flock Competition. *Photo by Sally Ware*

'There are plenty of examples from current wool sales that show wools selling on the same day, from the same area, with a similar micron, vegetable fault and tensile strength but with differing lengths – say, 62 mm – compared with 95 mm receiving the same clean price per kilo', says Mark.

Although Mark agrees that shearing early will result in reduced fleece weights per sheep per shearing, overall the same sheep will cut more wool in its lifetime with the increased intake of feed per animal after each shearing and hence increased wool growth.

'What we are seeing is an increase in demand from the processors for these types of wools – this is the main point. Processors such as the Chinese open top market want these wools and are prepared to pay the same as for similar wools with 12 months' length. In addition, by shearing early, there is less vegetable fault, less lice problems, higher yields and higher strength. The overall quality of the wool is increased significantly and the processors now have the machines to utilise shorter styles in quality tops. Short medium micron fleece wools are keenly sought after – that's the take-home message.'

'Sheep with long staple lengths are also the key. In other words, the sheep need to be able to produce wool with a staple length in excess of 100 mm at 12 months or 55 mm in 6 months, and the fibre diameter needs to be below 23.2 microns. Wool above 23.2 microns falls outside the type specification and is not suitable. This is the critical factor', Mark emphasises.

Mark said that although clients are slow to adapt to this new way of thinking, the ones that have moved their management to encompass shearing every 6 months are wondering why they didn't make the change sooner.

'Financially, they are making more money from their annual wool sales and their stock are easier to manage. But from my perspective as a broker, I know I can sell their short wool for the same price as if they waited and shored every 12 months', says Mark.

**For further details contact Mark Bazeley, Riverina Wool, Moama ph: 03 5482 2965; mobile: 0417 599 686.**

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# Have you seen a wild dog in your area?

By Ben Allen  
Project Officer  
Vertebrate Pest Research Unit  
NSW DPI Forbes

Wild dog sightings have been increasing in many parts of the Western Division, threatening the sheep, goat and kangaroo industries. To enable the distribution of wild dogs to be more clearly identified, the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre has developed Wild Dog Scan, which allows anyone to report a wild dog sighting and to make this information available online.

Simply visit the website, follow the links to Wild Dog Scan, and enter the details of your dog sighting. Sightings have been reported from all over the Western Division.

Visit [www.feralscan.org.au](http://www.feralscan.org.au) for more details and enter your wild dog sighting today.



Map showing wild dog sightings in western NSW on the Wild Dog Scan website. Landholders are strongly urged to report all wild dog sightings on this website.

## T&R goat donation: funding for wild dog control

In the ongoing effort to tackle the increasing wild dog problem in the sheep and goat production lands of western NSW, for every goat sold to them, T&R Pastoral Company is offering a 50-cent donation to local communities for the control of wild dogs. T&R Pastoral first began processing goats 3 years ago and since then has become one of the largest goat processors in Australia, killing

on average about 11 000 goats a week in their Lobethal (SA) and Wallangarra (Qld) abattoirs.

T&R Pastoral Company is genuinely concerned about the increasing threat of wild dogs to goat and sheep production in the Western Division of NSW, and this donation is being offered to help producers to manage wild dogs and their impacts and therefore ensure the long-term viability of rangeland sheep and goat industries in the region.

### Frequently asked questions

#### How much money is T&R offering?

T&R will provide a donation of 50 cents for each goat sold to them. For example, 10 000 goats = \$5000 and 30 000 goats = \$15 000, and so on. The more goats sold to T&R, the more funds will be available for local wild dog control.

#### Can everyone access the funds?

Yes. Funds are available to all Western Division landholders.

#### Who will the funds be given to?

Funds will not be provided to individuals but will be made available to groups of producers that work together to deliver coordinated wild-dog management programs. The objective of the funds is to deliver effective, coordinated wild-dog control over the region. Help to develop producer groups in areas where they don't currently exist will be provided by the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre, the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities (LHPAs), and Landcare Australia. For information about existing producer groups or the establishment of a new group in your

area, please contact one of the following organisations:

- The Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre, on 07 4688 1333
- your local LHPA
- a Regional Landcare Facilitator, on 02 6872 2144.

#### How will the funds then be distributed or allocated?

The Pastoralists' Association of West Darling will collect the funds from T&R and distribute them to groups across the Western Division. An application process and committee will be established to assess these applications before the funds are provided to producer groups. It is expected that funds will be distributed in accordance with local needs, as defined by each group's wild dog management plan.

#### What sort of activities can the funds be used for?

These activities should be made clear in wild dog management plans, but they are likely to include aerial or ground baiting programs, trapping or traps, or other control actions for wild dogs. In order to be most effective, wild-dog control activities must be strategic and coordinated over larger areas, and not conducted in a haphazard manner.

For more information about the T&R goat rebate contact Elaine Smith, phone **08 8087 3322** or email [pawd01@bigpond.net.au](mailto:pawd01@bigpond.net.au)

The Western Division Newsletter is produced by NSW Trade & Investment with funding assistance from:

- » Office of Environment and Heritage
- » Land and Property Information
- » Lachlan CMA
- » Lower Murray Darling CMA, and Western CMA

# Monitoring Western Division leases over the decades

Sometimes Crown Lands staff working within the Western Division are criticised by landholders and other stakeholders for not monitoring the Western Lands Leases they are responsible for administering. This criticism is far from the truth, as there has been 111 years of monitoring in various forms on Crown Lands in the Western Division.

The Western Division of NSW covers about 32 million hectares of rangelands, with rainfall ranging from 150 to 500 mm. Pastoral use of the area began with the first squatters, who arrived in the 1830s and mostly used a semi-nomadic pastoral system. From the 1860s onwards, after long periods of above-average rainfall and with overseas investment, the land started being distributed as homestead leases. However, the drought of the late 1890s, along with low wool prices, heavy sheep death rates, rabbit plagues and dust storms, drew attention to the need to regulate farming in the area. The establishment of the Western Territorial Division, later to become the Western Division of NSW, was derived from the *Crown Lands Act 1884*.

The Western Lands Act was formulated after a Royal Commission inquired into the condition of the Crown Tenants in the Western Division. The Royal Commission came about as a result of a series of articles written by Edward Millen, a landholder and parliamentarian, in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in November and December 1899 and January 1900 after a buggy ride of 1000 miles to the area and back. When sandstorms made it into Sydney, the effect was described as 'calamitous', and as a result of Royal Commission recommendations the Western Lands Act was prepared.

The Act was assented to on 27 December 1901, less than 3 months after its preparation, and it commenced on 1 January 1902. Importantly, the Act recognised the Western Division as a fragile area and made no further provisions for the alienation of Crown Lands. By ceasing the alienation of land it prevented large tracts of land from being taken away from the Crown Estate and therefore government control, and it subjected leased lands to conditions to ensure protection of the land resource and the environment.

With the creation of the *Western Lands Act 1901* came the need to monitor the leasehold pastoral lands. Lease conditions controlling the use of land and monitoring of land condition became part of the government's duties in respect to the

Crown estate. Monitoring of overstocking, land use (cultivation) and lease conditions is still an integral part of the Act today.

Western Lands Leases have been monitored through reporting on land condition by pastoral inspectors and (in the early days) also by the Western Lands Commissioners themselves. This monitoring was based upon the inspectors' experience and observation. The Western Division has been divided historically into pastoral districts, now called Rangelands Management Officer Districts, of which there are seven. Each has its own dedicated Rangelands Management Officer.

In the past two decades, the ways in which Western Lands Leases are monitored and reported upon have advanced greatly. Two decades ago, GPS was unheard of and cameras still used film! In 1990 a new system began and a policy was developed within the Western Lands Commission to visit every property within each of the Rangelands Management Inspectors' (as they were known then) districts over a 5-year period. This was to be a recurring inspection, so the system was called the cyclic inspection program. A new form (consisting of 11 pages) was developed to ensure consistent gathering of data, which ranged from updating the lessee's particulars to gathering stock numbers and estimating total grazing pressures, the vegetation species present and the condition of any improvements.

In 1995, the old cyclic inspection program changed and the old form became the Conservation and Land Management or CaLM property inspection form. It was revamped and information about total grazing pressure was removed; detailed information about the vegetation was also removed and put into another program, and the size of the form was reduced to seven pages. To provide more information on land condition, a photo point system was developed in 1996 on the basis of the premise that a picture is worth a thousand words. Comparison of photographs taken from the same location over a long period

David Gee  
Senior Rangelands  
Management Officer  
Crown Lands  
Balranald District

*Paper presented to  
'Re-valuing our rangelands'  
forum. This forum was hosted  
by Hay Trees on Plains  
Landcare Group, August 9, Hay*

*Continued on page 4*

*Continued from page 3*

of time was seen as a highly effective way of monitoring the rangelands, and this method is still being used today. Monitoring of Western Lands Leases basically then stayed the same over the next decade, with some more vegetation description data being gathered.

On 1 July 2011, a new program was developed by Crown Lands to track the changing condition of the rangelands. It is known as the Western Division Range Condition Assessment Program.

A target of 140 property inspections was set for 2011–2012, and by the end of June 2012, 134 property inspections had been done. The total was under the target, but this was mainly a result of the heavy rainfall and flooding that occurred in many of the districts, making access to properties very difficult.

What is different with this monitoring program is the measurement of biomass, which until now (111 years after the beginning of the Western Lands Act) has been primarily subjective. The new program seeks to eliminate subjectivity from the assessment and provide a comparative analysis of landholdings, having regard to land and vegetation types as well as climatic conditions. The program seeks to engage with landholders and is based in part on plant biomass. There are several methods that can be used to collect

biomass data, but the biomass photo standard is a simple, objective and robust measure that has been used in South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia and by state agencies such as NSW DPI. Data will be gathered in each Rangelands Management Officer's district from each range type to establish the photo standards. This information will be used to help Crown Lands staff to assess the condition of leases throughout the Western Division.

**For any further information regarding the Western Division Range Condition Assessment Program, please contact your local Rangeland Management Officer:**

**Anthony Azevedo – Bourke**  
Phone (02) 6872 2144

**David Gee – Balranald**  
Phone (03) 5051 6204

**Geoffry Cullenward – Wilcannia**  
Phone (08) 8082 5202

**Ian Kelly – Wentworth**  
Phone (03) 5051 6205

**Jacqueline Mills – Cobar**  
Phone (02) 6836 3018

**Peter Smith – Walgett**  
Phone (02) 6828 0111

**Tiff Brown – Broken Hill and Unincorporated Area**  
Phone (08) 8082 5203

## Book prize winner's reply

**Winner of the *Plants of Western New South Wales* book prize for completing the survey on the Western Division Newsletter was Mr Alf Withers, of 'Springwood' Station via Wentworth.**

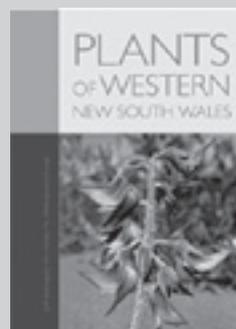
*Mr Withers has kindly given permission for us to reprint his personal sentiments in his thank-you letter to Newsletter editor Sally Ware:*

Last week our mail delivered a surprise parcel which had us puzzled until the big sealed envelope was opened – and what a pleasant shock! It must be about the only thing of value that has come my way in regard to prizes and raffles in all my many years. We will value the book, as we have the original, purchased I think in 1981. My wife Maxine has marked with pencil all the plants, shrubs and trees that have been identified from our hundred thousand acres, so you can imagine it is showing signs of use!

We knew Geoff Cunningham well. He and his partners have done a remarkable job. Thank you sincerely for forwarding that wonderful prize.

Mr Withers also made some interesting points in a letter to us dated 30 June 2012, including the following excerpt:

About 160 years ago, Merino sheep were introduced to the area under the care of shepherds – their primitive shelters and the remains of brush yards [are] still evident. Sometime later, fences were erected using native timber posts and imported wire, making them sheep and cattle proof. The confined sheep were let to huge paddocks, and provided that predators left [the sheep] alone and they were shown watering points,



the 'old timers' found that the environment benefited them as well as the stock. With diseases such as those described in Western Division Newsletter No. 137 and also the threat of parasites and wool contamination, it is essential that more stringent regulation [of fencing] will have to be enforced.

In his correspondence, Mr Withers pointed out that he has spent many thousands of dollars on fencing at 'Springwood'. He also expressed his concerns about the use of holistic farming practices in the area.

# Bitou bush eradication program at Lake Menindee

By Lower Murray Darling CMA

*Chrysanthemoides monilifera* subsp. *rotundata*, commonly known as bitou bush, is a South African native that was introduced to the eastern foreshore of Lake Menindee in the 1960s to help stabilise the foreshore dunes.

Bitou bush poses a significant threat to biodiversity conservation and the management of native vegetation, and in 1999 it was declared a WoNS (Weed of National Significance).

Since its fateful introduction to the area in the 1960s, bitou bush has infested more than 240 ha of the lake's foreshore, and in some sections a monoculture of bitou bush has formed.

In 2009–10 a taskforce was developed to eradicate bitou bush from Lake Menindee and was successful in obtaining funds from Caring for our Country to start the eradication process. In 2009, bitou bush was mapped in the area and subsequent physical removal of plants began.

Since 2009, herbicidal control and hand-removal of juveniles have been done on an annual basis. This has resulted in a massive decline in the overall population of bitou bush in the area.

Local residents have been made aware of the program and have acted as 'surveillance spotters', reporting potential new incursions to the Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority (LMD CMA) and the



Bitou bush at Lake Menindee. Photo supplied by Lower Murray Darling CMA

Bitou Bush Control and Surveillance Lake Menindee



Map of the bitou bush eradication area, near Copi Hollow, Lake Menindee. Supplied by Lower Murray Darling CMA

National Parks and Wildlife Service. Fortunately, in the Western Division bitou bush has not been identified outside the current surveillance area.

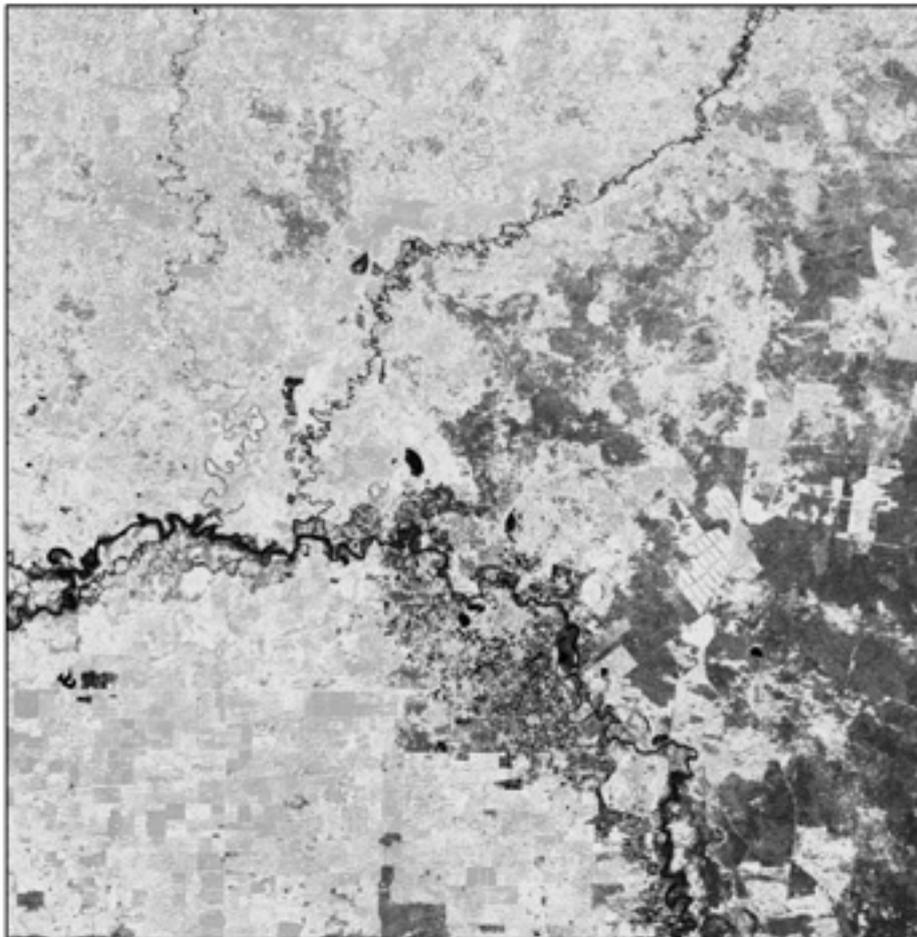
With a bitou bush seed viability of 10 years and the extant population now under control, the LMD CMA is committed to continuing the follow-up effort to ensure that bitou bush is eradicated from the shores of Lake Menindee.

Further details can be obtained from Andrew Schweitzer, Catchment Officer, PVP & Projects, at the Buronga Office of the LMD CMA, on 03 5021 9460.

# Remote-sensing ground cover project in the Lower Murray Darling CMA

By Lower Murray Darling CMA

## Example of remote-sensing ground cover project 2009



### Legend

I5tmre\_LMD\_e2009\_diem4.img

### Value



The ability to monitor the extent of ground cover at a catchment scale is critical in the planning and evaluation of natural resource management programs. There are both regional and national priorities and targets for maintaining ground cover, owing to its importance in preventing wind and soil erosion and its role in protecting biodiversity.

By providing habitat for native fauna species and preventing overgrazing and potential species loss, maintaining ground cover is an effective way to protect Australia's natural resources.

A recently completed project that began in 2009 for the Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority (LMD CMA) and the former Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) evaluated the use of remote-sensing-based ground cover indexes for mapping and monitoring ground cover.

It included the field-collection of ground cover measurements at sites in the LMD CMA. These site data were used in conjunction with near-coincident Landsat satellite imagery to calibrate and validate two alternative ground cover models that could be used to develop ground cover products. The results were encouraging, and the study recommended further development of the remote-sensing approach, including further calibration and validation, and model and product development.

Further details can be obtained from **Andrew Schweitzer, Catchment Officer, PVP & Projects, at the Buronga Office of the LMD CMA on 03 5021 9460.**

Example of results from the 2009 remote-sensing ground cover project. *Courtesy LMD CMA.*

### Western Division Newsletter

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The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (August 2012). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services or the user's independent adviser.

# Daughterless carp project rescued by Lower Murray Darling CMA

By Lower Murray Darling CMA

A research project that is developing a potential long-term control option for use in the battle against introduced carp has been saved by an injection of funds from the Lower Murray Darling (LMD) CMA.

Carp are native to many temperate regions of Asia. They were introduced to Australia as early as 1850 and have since become major pests. Carp compete with native fish for habitat and food resources, and they contribute to the degradation of waterways by sifting through sediment as they feed, muddying the water and depleting in-stream vegetation.

For the last 10 years, CSIRO has been developing genetic options for the control and possible eradication of carp in Australia. 'Daughterless technology' aims to alter carp so that they produce mainly male offspring, thus over the long term driving the pest to extinction as females become increasingly rare in the population.

Laboratory studies in zebra-fish (a small, short-lived relative of the carp) show that daughterless technology is achievable, but a key question is whether the approach will work in carp.

With the support of the Murray Darling Basin Authority, in 2009 a collaborative project with the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (IACRC), CSIRO and Auburn University in the USA was initiated to answer this question. However, funding was withdrawn earlier this year as part of research rationalisation. The LMD CMA has since stepped in and provided just under \$60 000 in funding to the IACRC to continue this critical research into daughterless carp.

The first sets of carp produced as part of the research are just now maturing, and preliminary data from them strongly suggest that the daughterless theory is working as planned. However, until the changes are incorporated into the fish's genes and passed onto their offspring (which should be predominantly males) the success of the project will not be known. It will take several additional years to complete this analysis, as carp take at least 2 years to reach sexual maturity.

LMD CMA Chair Cheryl Rix said, 'Our Catchment Action Plan has targets relating

to the health of the native fish population and carp have been identified as one of the most significant barriers toward achieving these targets. This has been particularly evident over the past 2 or 3 years, with major increases in carp abundance observed during the LMD CMA annual fish monitoring program'.

The potential of daughterless carp technology was recognised by the LMD CMA, which in June this year agreed to provide funding to the IACRC to continue daughterless carp research for a further 12 months.

'This LMD CMA funding will ensure that newly maturing carp will be able to breed and the next stage of the research on the second generation of carp can continue. Without the LMD CMA's intervention the research would have ceased and more than 5000 juvenile and newly maturing carp produced so far would have been destroyed', Ms Rix said.

**More information can be obtained from Troy Muster, Catchment Officer Projects, on 03 5021 9460, or from the IACRC on 02 6201 2890 or [contact@invasiveanimals.com](mailto:contact@invasiveanimals.com)**

An injection of funds from the LMD CMA has taken the release of daughterless carp in the Murray Darling Basin a step closer to reality. *Photo courtesy of the Invasive Animals CRC*



# Goulburn Murray Landcare network gets a taste of the west

By Lower Murray Darling CMA

Not every catchment region in Australia is the same, and the diversity among catchments can be appreciated only when a busload of interstate Landcare volunteers wants to see 'what's on the other side of the fence'.

In June 2012 such an opportunity was taken up by the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network with the aim of learning more about the environmental and social issues that affect the Lower Murray Darling catchment region. The Network's volunteers are very active and include farming and residential members of all age groups.

The bus tour took them from Wentworth to Broken Hill and Menindee and then across to Ivanhoe, with the help of two LMD CMA staff who outlined the current issues of weed and pest management, best-practice farming within extreme landscapes, and Carbon Farming Initiative opportunities, along with information on how best the local CMA can help the whole community.

A recently completed project, Menindee Cultural Gardens, was visited. The gardens will act as a culturally significant educational resource for the current and future generations, and they gave the group a better understanding of the engagement of Menindee's Aboriginal community with the land. The gardens give the Menindee community an area to showcase native vegetation, a future potential income source of bush tucker, and a drawcard that is a great place for local people to meet and call their own. The welcome provided by the Menindee Local Aboriginal Land Council was exceptional, and networking over a lunch of native meat dishes and other succulent native foods encouraged camaraderie and a new understanding for the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network group.

Group at Lake Popiltah.  
Photo supplied by Lower  
Murray Darling CMA



Barry Philp, Manager of State Water at Menindee, gave the group an in-depth overview of the Menindee Lakes system and how important the management of the water is to the Darling River below the Lakes.

While at Menindee the group took advantage of the wonderful sunset over the Menindee Lakes. Cameras clicked away as the setting light provided a short window of opportunity to capture the beauty of this time of day.

No trip would be complete without meeting another Landcare Group, and back in Broken Hill that night the group dined with members of Landcare Broken Hill. John and Caroline Dart outlined their group's objectives and future goals. They also provided an insight into the life of Albert Morris (1886–1939), who was interested in cultivating a desert garden and experimenting with a wide range of plants from overseas dry areas such as Arizona and South Africa. Morris was instrumental in controlling sand drift around Broken Hill by establishing a green belt surrounded by rabbit-proof fencing. He had a remarkable understanding of the three basic principles of natural regeneration: exclusion of grazing animals and rabbits; careful positioning of fences to protect trees from prevailing winds; and choice of local plants well adapted to the hot, dry conditions of Broken Hill. Landcare Broken Hill is endeavouring to identify and re-establish some of Albert Morris's formations as a testament to his brilliance and forward thinking.

From the full Menindee Lakes system, the final leg of the journey was to Ivanhoe, another interesting landscape that is very different from that of the Goulburn Broken catchment. At Ivanhoe a local farmer gave a colourful overview of farming in this area of NSW. He spoke about the ideal growing conditions currently being experienced, as well as the natural resource management issues arising from the introduction of meat sheep breeds, and ways of managing the new weed species brought into the area by the recent floods.

Overall, the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network group was extremely happy to be able to share this experience and come into contact with such a varied group of LMD catchment community members. Members now have a better appreciation of just how different and difficult life can be in the Far West.

**More details can be obtained from Kim Trigg, NSW Regional Landcare Facilitator, on 03 5021 9460.**

# NPWS tackles feral animals and noxious weeds out west

## Bourke area pest control

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has completed an extensive pest control program to tackle feral pigs and foxes in the Bourke Area, removing over 3000 feral pigs from the environment.

NPWS Senior Ranger Pests Brett Norman said that the NPWS had joined forces with the Darling Livestock Health and Pest Authority, the Western Catchment Management Authority and local landholders.

'The program was conducted earlier this year at Toorale, Gundabooka and Culgoa national parks and Nocoleche and Ledknapper nature reserves, as well as on eleven adjoining properties.

'Feral animals don't recognise boundaries, and although the program was largely conducted on national parks estate, joint programs like this one are very effective in controlling feral animals across the landscape', Mr Norman said.

'We were able to remove 2652 pigs and 39 foxes from the national parks estate, along with 772 pigs and 16 foxes on neighbouring properties.

'Feral pigs and foxes are significant threats to the conservation of the natural environment and native wildlife. Foxes prey on native wildlife and feral pigs can invade native wildlife habitat, including areas used by ground-nesting birds, and displace them from that habitat.

'The program will help to reduce the impacts from these pests on our environment and native wildlife. It will also help landholders neighbouring the parks and reserves by

reducing pest animal movements from and to private property.'

The NPWS is committed to controlling pests in national parks and protecting our natural environment. NPWS will be conducting further pest control programs in the far west region this year.

## Paroo-Darling boxthorn control

The NPWS has implemented a boxthorn control project in the Paroo-Darling National Park to help protect native vegetation and wildlife.

African boxthorn is a serious weed threat in Australia, and in most parts of NSW it has been declared a noxious weed under the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*. It is a woody weed that forms a spiny thicket. It usually grows to about 2 to 3 m high and 3 m across. The spiny thickets provide a haven for feral animals, and the weed competes with native vegetation for nutrients.

Brett Norman said that the project involved NPWS officers mechanically removing 1000 boxthorn plants with a hydraulic puller and spraying a further 600 plants.

'Physically removing the bushes is an effective way of helping stop mature bushes from forming thickets. Younger bushes respond well to spraying, and so by combining both methods we are maximising the results and stopping the weed from spreading in the park', Mr Norman said.

The NPWS will be running follow-up control programs to protect native wildlife and the natural environment within Paroo-Darling National Park.



Removing entire boxthorn bushes helps to stop thicket formation. *Photo supplied by NPWS*

# Mt Hope farmers working to protect malleefowl habitat

By Kylie Krause  
Public Relations & Media  
Officer  
Lachlan CMA  
Temora

A community meeting of local landholders and representatives from the Office of Environment and Heritage (incorporating the NPWS), the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities and the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority (CMA) was held in Mt Hope in July to develop a project to increase malleefowl numbers on private land in the area. This ground-nesting bird has suffered significant declines across much of southern Australia because of fox predation and habitat loss. It is listed as Endangered under the NSW Threatened *Species Act 1995* and Vulnerable under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The Lachlan CMA has been monitoring malleefowl activity in its catchment for the past 3 years. A recent aerial survey revealed a breeding population of malleefowl east of Mt Hope. The survey also observed high numbers of feral pigs and foxes in the area.

Two of the largest threats to the survival of the malleefowl near Mt Hope are habitat

fragmentation and predation by introduced species. Fortunately, despite the abundance of feral pigs and foxes, a considerable amount of intact remnant vegetation remains in the area. The predator management program championed by this project aims to protect existing malleefowl populations and permit the expansion of their range.

'The focus of the project is to establish a long-term integrated predator-control program that combines traditional and innovative control techniques to help protect the malleefowl in the Mt Hope area', says Jason Wishart, a Field Research Officer with the Invasive Animals CRC (Cooperative Research Centre) who is working on this project. Foxes and feral pigs are two of Australia's most important invasive species, as they prey on numerous wildlife species, compete for resources and spread diseases.

A best-practice integrated pest management control program that includes the use of poison baiting, HogHopper™ bait stations, M44 poison ejectors and other innovations as they become available will be used to control feral pigs and foxes. It will create a new land bridge at Mt Hope between habitats that the malleefowl already uses and suitable new habitats. The program will link with broad-area fox control undertaken on Yathong, Nombinnie and Round Hill nature reserves by the NPWS under the NSW Fox Threat Abatement Plan (see [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/pestsweeds/Foxes.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/pestsweeds/Foxes.htm)).

'It's highly likely that if fox and feral pig numbers remain at their current levels then the malleefowl will cease to exist in the area in the future', commented Angela Higgins, a Catchment Officer with the Lachlan CMA in Hillston.

Many experts agree that introduced predators have contributed to the decline of many native species, especially ground-dwelling mammals and ground-nesting birds. In addition to their deleterious impacts on natural ecosystems, such predators also reduce agricultural productivity, costing industry more than \$130 million a year.

Aerial surveys of the project area will be done at the end of August and in early September.

The project is being funded by the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future Fund and is managed by the Invasive Animals CRC in partnership with the Lachlan CMA.

**For more information about this project, or on malleefowl in the Lachlan catchment, please contact Angela Higgins on 0428 603 214.**

Feral pigs taking baits in the Lachlan CMA. Photo courtesy Invasive Animals CRC



# Geoff Wise: a man who has dedicated his life to the west

Geoff Wise, General Manager of Bourke Shire Council since 2007 and a man who has dedicated his working life to the west in many and varied roles, will be retiring in October.



Geoff attended Sydney University from 1964 to 1968, graduating from Veterinary Science at Sydney University in early 1969. On graduation, he was employed by the NSW Department of Agriculture at Dubbo, Hay and Lismore, concentrating on herd and flock health and playing very significant roles in the eradication of tuberculosis and brucellosis from the national cattle population. During his brief spell at Lismore he was responsible for designing the entire field components for the NSW brucellosis campaign. He developed widely recognised expertise, not only with tuberculosis and brucellosis in cattle, but also with anthrax, foot and mouth disease and various production diseases in sheep. Promotions to Narrandera and to Dubbo in 1981 ultimately led to his appointment as Regional Director of Agriculture, responsible for government agriculture programs for the Orana and Far West Region, from east of Mudgee to Broken Hill and the Queensland Border.

Geoff undertook postgraduate studies in epidemiology (the study of diseases in populations) and became a member of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists in this speciality. This training, combined with the analytical skills learned in his veterinary studies, has been very useful in applying scientific principles to the environmental, social and economic challenges in his subsequent careers.

In 1995, Geoff was appointed Regional Director, Far West, in the Department of Land and Water Conservation (which subsequently became the Department of Natural Resources), and simultaneously became Western Lands Commissioner. He held these complex positions until 2007.

In fulfilling these roles simultaneously for over a decade, Geoff was responsible for integrating and implementing a wide range of government policies. His responsibilities as

Geoff Wise, who is retiring from his position as General Manager, Bourke Shire Council in October 2012. *Photo by Andrew Hull*

*Continued on page 12*

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Regional Director included managing water, vegetation, soil conservation, infrastructure, land use and regional planning across the western 42% of NSW. Managing the complexities of the whole length of the Barwon Darling River system, implementing vegetation reform and working with new perspectives on Native Title were special challenges.

Geoff's responsibilities as Western Lands Commissioner were as varied as being the Landlord of Western Lands and other Crown lease lands covering over 40% of NSW, as well as Chair of the Wild Dog Destruction Board. He was also a de facto Local Government entity charged with reviewing such varied legislation as the Disorderly Houses Act in the 10% of NSW called the Unincorporated Area, where there is no local government.

In over 100 years of the history of the Western Lands Commission, no one else in this position has ever had such wide-ranging government responsibilities combined with the role of Western Lands Commissioner.

Additionally, from 1996 to 2007 Geoff chaired the management board of the highly successful WEST 2000 and WEST 2000 Plus \$30-million tripartite Commonwealth and State government and landholder rural restructuring programs across the Western Division. These programs proved to be catalysts for change in many traditional rural practices across western NSW.

As an adjunct to Geoff's employment, he was an active Member of Charles Sturt University Council for 8 years, as well as Chair of the Charles Sturt University Dubbo Campus Advisory Committee, a member of the State Orana Regional Development Board for 7 years, Chair of the Commonwealth Regional Development Organisation (Orana Area Consultative Committee) for 3 years, and a member of the Commonwealth Queensland/ NSW Darling Matilda Sustainable Regions Committee for 3 years. He has also been a Board Member of the Royal Flying Doctor Service. A number of these positions were Ministerial appointments, at both Commonwealth and State levels.

In 2007 Geoff and his wife Anne moved to Bourke, Geoff taking on the position of

General Manager of Bourke Shire Council. His 5 years in this position gave him great insights into social issues, particularly relating to communities involving both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. The combined impacts of an extended drought, varying water licensing policies and overall loss of confidence in rural communities has resulted in the Bourke area experiencing a 30% population decline since 2000. Between 2001 and 2006, this population decline was the third-largest of all shires across Australia, behind two remote shires in Western Australia. These climatic, production, policy and demographic impacts, in a community with a 30% indigenous population and few opportunities for unskilled labour, combine to create numerous challenges in managing local government.

Geoff feels privileged to have enjoyed a career that has been directly involved at senior management and strategic levels in the triple-bottom-line experiences of economic (through agricultural and regional development), environmental (through natural resource management) and social (through his Bourke Shire Council responsibilities, together with his active participation in cultural, political, educational and community experiences). Very few other professionals have had similar opportunities across all three of these elements.

Most importantly, Geoff acknowledges the invaluable insights and knowledge he has gained from the wisdom and experience of hands-on practitioners in the enterprises with whom he has shared his career.

Geoff and Anne have three sons, who have graduated from the Universities of Sydney (Dentistry), Wollongong (Civil Engineering) and New England (Agricultural Economics).

Throughout Geoff's career his attitude has been to work constructively with community people and policy-makers, critically analyse challenges, their causes and solutions, and add value while applying common sense.

Geoff says that rather than continuing to spay cats for 40 years after the first one, he has enjoyed the journey of taking on new challenges in areas where he feels he can make a difference.

**Geoff and Anne will be returning to live in Dubbo. Geoff can be contacted on his home email [ga.wise@bigpond.com](mailto:ga.wise@bigpond.com)**

Deadline for articles for the next Issue 143 of the Western Division Newsletter is Friday November 2, 2012.  
Please email articles to Sally Ware to [sally.ware@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:sally.ware@dpi.nsw.gov.au) or phone 0429 307 627.

# Where is the outback?

By Geoff Wise

Early in my professional career, as a veterinarian based at Hay, I was being given an introductory tour west of Ivanhoe, way beyond the black stump at Merriwagga in south-west NSW.

It was a typical hot, dusty summer's day, when Max Watson, the local Ranger from Hillston Pastures Protection Board, said to me:

'This is about the edge of civilisation – but I'm not sure which way it goes'.

Over the following four decades, I've regularly reflected on this statement. The more I have to do with people in 'the outback', the more I appreciate how civil they are: welcoming, polite, frank, citizen-minded, appreciative, committed to voluntary services such as Red Cross, CWA, RFDS and Rural Fire Service, offering a friendly wave as you pass on the lonely track, looking each other in the eye and respecting each other for who they are.

I've questioned myself regarding the differences on either side of the mythical 'edge of civilisation'.

My conclusion, which is obviously a generalisation, is that on 'the outback' side, where the population is low and sparsely distributed, people build on each other's strengths, because they never know when they may require assistance from someone else, no matter how little they may have in common: a medical emergency, flat tyre, bush fire, flood, support during times of grief, sharing limited resources; and offering, 'Are you alright mate?'

Conversely, on the more highly populated side of the mythical 'edge of civilisation', people tend to exploit the weakness of others, competing for what is scarce, focusing on self interest and, ironically, operating in isolation: the last seat in a bus, the jostling in a crowded queue, the brash salesperson, the suburban thief, the arsonist, the biased commentator; yet never making eye or voice contact in a crowded train or lift.

Gerald Blore, who last lived at Tibooburra, was a proud Australian whom I suspect had Afghan, Aboriginal, Irish and English heritage, and whom I have respected for his outback knowledge and wisdom, aptly said, 'I once camped at an isolated waterhole for three weeks without seeing a single person, yet I was in touch with all the spirits. I then went to Sydney and saw millions of people, but not a soul to say g'day to'.

As a real measure of building on strengths on the civilised side, reconciliation is not talked about; it happens naturally. People of all backgrounds walk shoulder to shoulder, laughing, crying, working, playing, helping, planning and leading together.

Compare this with 'the other side', where despite positive rhetoric, the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) principle so frequently continues. Of the thousands who walked across the Harbour Bridge and signed the Sorry Book, how many continued their journey to have coffee on the sidewalk, and how many continued to Redfern to extend a hand?

Banjo Patterson, in *Clancy of the Overflow*, wrote:

*And the hurrying people daunt me and their  
pallid faces haunt me,  
As they shoulder one another in their rush and  
nervous haste,  
With their eager eyes and greedy,  
And their stunted forms and weedy,  
For townfolk have no time to grow,  
They have no time to waste.*

*And I somehow rather fancy that I'd like to  
change with Clancy,  
Like to take a turn at droving where the seasons  
come and go ...*

It is no wonder that Banjo Patterson wrote about 'the outback':

*that the drover's life has pleasures that the  
townfolk never know.*

There is little doubt in my mind that the outback is not so much a place or destination defined by geography or isolation, as it is a place defined by our attitude to our fellow people, building on personal strengths and civil values.

Anne and I have been privileged to share most of our lives with so many civilised people in the wonderful outback.

This publication was written by Geoff Wise and Maree Barnes in 2003 to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the Western Lands Act and the Year of the Outback. A reprint of this booklet is available from Western CMA offices and a number of tourist information centres including the Back of Bourke Exhibition Centre. Phone 02 6872 1321 (50% of the proceeds are donated to the Royal Flying Doctor Service).



# Fran Rowe: 2012 Woman of the Year

Article reprinted with permission from No. 57 Spring 2012 edition of *The Country Web* ([www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn))

Fran Rowe, who is a past co-chair and inaugural member of the Rural Women's Network State Advisory Committee, Tottenham farmer and Rural Financial Counsellor, was named the NSW Premier's Woman of the Year at a ceremony in Sydney in May. Fran received the award for supporting and empowering Australia's agricultural sector during tough times. The citation noted that, having dedicated most of her life to protecting rural communities, farming families and the agricultural sector from the difficulties they face, Fran Rowe remains an inspirational voice for those in need.

In 1984, Fran, who is well known to many rural families throughout the state, established a voluntary rural financial counselling service at her family farm, based at Tottenham. This voluntary service was the model for the national Rural Financial Counselling Service, which now operates with more than 95 rural financial counsellors across the country.

Fran Rowe, 2012 Woman of the Year. Photo courtesy Department of Family and Community Services



Early recognition of Fran's work with farming families came in 1989, when she received the Ronald Anderson Award for Agriculture – an award commonly known and inscribed as 'Man of the Year in Agriculture'!

Receipt of that award by a farming woman encouraged the belated recognition that the Australian farmer was not necessarily a bronzed, Akubra-hatted male but could also be a woman in the farm kitchen, the farm office or the dusty sheep yard. When discussing the award recently, Fran chuckled that she was absolutely delighted to have evolved from 'Man of the Year' to 'Woman of the Year'!

In addition to acting as a rural financial counsellor, Fran has contributed to a number of agricultural boards and committees, including the Rural Adjustment Scheme Advisory Council (responsible for advice to Commonwealth Ministers on Exceptional Circumstances conditions); the Agricultural Finance Forum (seeking to improve communication between the rural sector, government and financial institutions) and the Agriculture and Food Policy Reference Group (which reported to the Australian Government on future food and agricultural policy). In addition, she has served as a board member of the NSW Rural Assistance Authority since 1989, encouraging the efficient and effective administration of drought- and flood-assistance measures and developing the processes and procedures that the Authority needs to administer the Farm Debt Mediation Act.

Commenting on the Premier's Woman of The Year award, Fran noted the importance of agriculture to the economic prosperity of the nation and said, 'It's a great award, which by its very existence celebrates the ongoing contribution of women to the economic and social prosperity of this great state. I'm proud to be the 2012 recipient'.

Jeff Caldbeck, CEO of the Rural Financial Counselling Service NSW Central West, said that Fran was a fantastic role model and highly deserving of the award. 'This award acknowledges her outstanding work and significant contributions within the rural sector. Fran is an extraordinary woman from the bush whose influence and dedication are now fully recognised', he said.

# How changes to bovine Johne's disease zones will affect the Western Division

Changes to BJD zones will make moving cattle to agistment, and buying stores, from South Australia and the rest of NSW a little easier.

Restrictions on buying or agisting cattle from Victoria and Tasmanian Management Areas remain tight, as do restrictions on agisting beef cattle on land that carries, or that has carried, dairy cattle.

Buying or agisting dairy or dairy-cross cattle from any area is a threat to be avoided.

The main changes will affect New South Wales and South Australia, where the current Control Zones and Protected Zone will be abolished. They will be replaced by the Beef Protected Area (BPA). Dairy cattle and dairying land pose critical risks to beef cattle and land. Consequently the risk from the dairy sector is much higher and must be handled differently from the risk from the beef sector.

The new BJD zones are shown below.

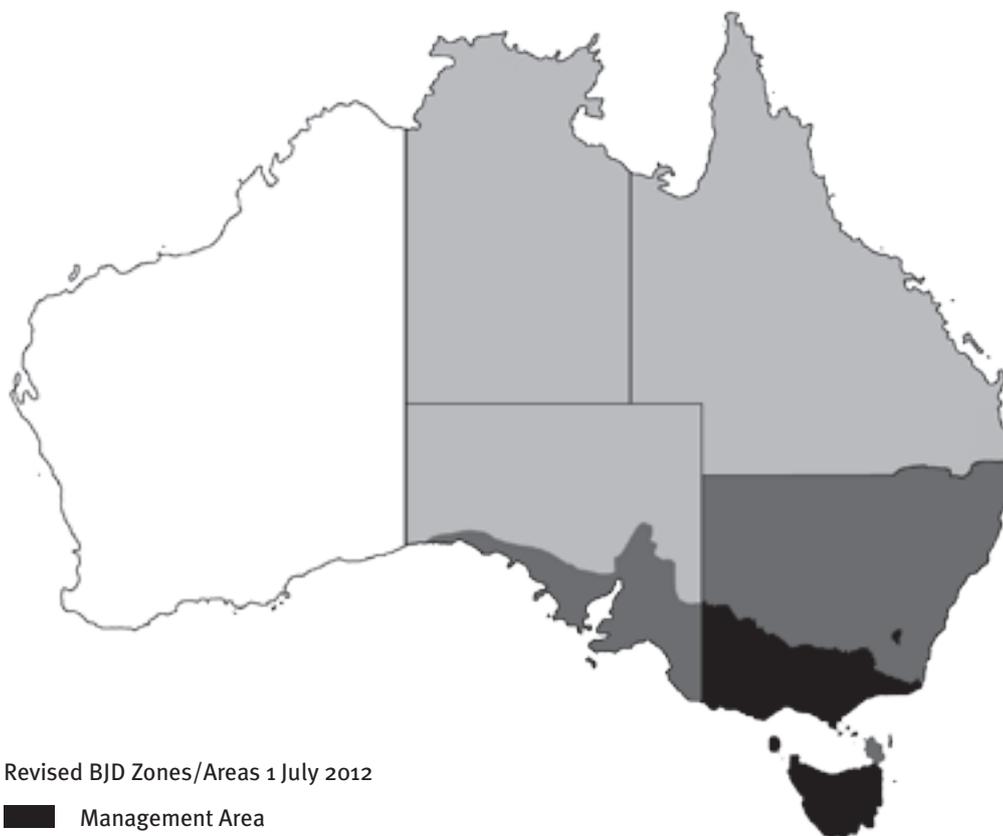
Cattle that are steers and are to be slaughtered before 24 months of age can be traded from high-risk situations (such as from a Management Area into our BPA), but:

1. always ask for an animal health statement when buying cattle, goats and alpacas to assess and manage the risk of stock offered for sale
2. assume responsibility for managing the risks of BJD and other diseases on your property
3. always ask for the Dairy BJD Assurance Score if buying young steers that are dairy-breed or beef-breed from dairy holdings.

For more detail, go to: [http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/437170/BJD-Movement-Controls-in-NSW-second-edition.pdf](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/437170/BJD-Movement-Controls-in-NSW-second-edition.pdf)

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/health/specific/cattle/bjd/frequently-asked-questions>

By Greg Curran  
Veterinary Officer  
NSW DPI Broken Hill



Revised BJD Zones/Areas 1 July 2012

- Management Area
- Beef Protected Area
- Protected Zone
- Free Zone

Revised bovine Johne's disease zones and areas as at 1 July 2012

# Ovine Johne's disease in the Western division and nationally

By Dermot McNerney  
Veterinary Officer  
NSW DPI Dareton

Since the survey in June last year in which the majority of ratepayers opted to continue with the ovine Johne's disease Exclusion Area, the Western LHPA and NSW DPI have been diligently following up suspicious inbound sheep movements. This was a requirement of our Operational Plan. In summary, most Western ratepayers buy stock either locally or from Low Prevalence areas such as South Australia, and most are careful not to buy without Sheep Health Statements with 4 or more ABC (assurance-based credit) points. We follow up on the few who buy from Victoria or other Medium or High Prevalence Areas. To date, we have had to do only one risk assessment. The producer eventually decided to destock and graze the property for 15 months with either cattle or with sheep less than 12 months of age.

OJD is a silent and costly disease, and Western ratepayers have rightly decided to keep it out. Infected sheep may look healthy, but they shed high numbers of bacteria before the disease becomes apparent. OJD has serious welfare and financial impacts: it seriously affects production, and infected sheep waste away and eventually die.

At a national level, an extensive review of the OJD management plan is being undertaken by the Sheepmeat Council of Australia and WoolProducers Australia. These bodies have identified further improvements to help producers to control and prevent OJD. The changes that can be announced so far are outlined below.

## National OJD Program changes

From 1 January 2013 the national program will no longer use the existing High, Medium and Low Prevalence Areas and Exclusion Areas. These will be replaced by Control and Protected Areas.

### Protected Areas

From 1 January 2013, a Protected Area will be an area where the disease is not known to occur, or is rare, and a regional biosecurity plan is in place to prevent, detect and control the disease. Trading or moving sheep always carries an OJD risk, and a Sheep Health Statement will be required.

Some regions will be able to become Protected Areas by demonstrating that their OJD prevalence is low and that action is being taken to prevent it from

entering their region and control the disease if found. The Western Division will likely be reclassified as a Protected Area, because a) it is an Exclusion Area and b) we are implementing our Exclusion Area Operational Plan to keep the disease out.

The risk of disease spread is greater when animals are moved from a Control Area to a Protected Area, so there will be minimum entry requirements set. The ABC points may be replaced by other entry requirements. Requirements will be announced later by the National Johne's Disease Program.

### Control Areas

From 1 January 2013, a Control Area will be one where the disease is well established or where there is no regional approach to preventing OJD. Sheep producers in Control Areas will need to manage their own risk, and there are a number of tools available to help. These include vaccination, flock testing, SheepMAP, grazing management and biosecurity measures such as using Sheep Health Statements when trading.

*The OJD status of the Western Division will be discussed in more detail in the next issue of the newsletter.*

## In summary

The National OJD Management Plan is being revised and some changes have already been announced. From 1 January 2013, Exclusion Areas and Low, Medium and High Prevalence Areas will give way to Protected (low risk) and Control (high risk) Areas. The Western Division will likely be a Protected Area, because a) we are an Exclusion Area and b) we have a working Exclusion Area Operational Plan.

All producers should:

- purchase sheep with a Sheep Health Statement identifying them as high assurance (low risk). For the Western Division this means at least 4 ABC points, until new entry requirements are announced.
- maintain good on-farm biosecurity practices. (See [www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au) for biosecurity tips.)
- provide a Sheep Health Statement when selling sheep not for slaughter
- visit [www.ojd.com.au](http://www.ojd.com.au) for further information as it become available.



Trading or moving sheep always carries an OJD risk, and a Sheep Health Statement will be required. *Photo supplied by Dermot McNerney*

# Dermatosparaxis in Dorpers

On a recent visit to a Dorper commercial enterprise to test rams for ovine brucellosis (OB), the owners also wanted to test for ovine dermatosparaxis (OD), because over the past 12 months about six lambs on the property had been found with the condition. The owners had thoroughly studied OD on the web and advised us that 'it doesn't happen in Dorpers (black heads)'. At the time of the test, it was probably more correct to say that dermatosparaxis 'had yet to be recorded in Dorpers'.

For the OD test, you simply need to take a blood sample onto a square of blotting paper, being careful not to contaminate the samples with your own DNA. Samples are tested at the State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at Menangle, which incidentally was the first lab in the world to develop and offer the OD diagnostic test.

Of the 34 rams sampled on the property, five were carriers. Interestingly, one of the five was a Dorper! Before this case, the dermatosparaxis mutation had not been reported in the Dorper breed. The result demonstrates that the mutation is present, but probably at a lower frequency than in White Dorpers. (For the sceptics, the test was repeated on the five carriers using both the blood test and specifically a hair test on the Dorper ram; the results were the same!)

OD is a disorder that is caused by a genetic mutation and affects connective tissue development in some animal species (cattle, cats and sheep) and humans. In humans it has several clinical forms, many of which are unlike the condition that occurs in sheep. (Check out 'Ehlers-Danlos syndrome' on the web for information on the human condition.) In sheep, the condition affects the skin's attachment to underlying tissue to a point where it is extremely fragile and readily tears away from the body. For this reason, lambs with the condition either die or are euthanased. In many cases, lambs present with 'degloving' wounds, where the skin has come away and exposes the raw layer underneath. Commonly, the producer may notice wounds on a lamb; when the lamb is picked up normally, the skin just tears away from the body. This is very painful for the lamb and distressing for the owner.

So why does this lethal condition happen? A lamb with only one copy of the mutant gene will not express OD. The disease will show itself only when two copies (one from each parent) of the mutant gene are present.

The mode of inheritance of OD in Dorpers is autosomal recessive. 'Autosomal' means that the affected gene is not carried on a sex chromosome (X or Y), so it is not sex-linked.

Because OD is a genetic disease, animals are described as non-carriers (N) or carriers (C).

Every animal has two alleles, or copies, of a gene (one copy from the sire and one from the dam). Non-carriers have two normal alleles. Carriers have one normal allele and one mutant allele, and affected animals have two mutant alleles.

Possible chromosome combinations:



Because OD is a recessive disease, animals must have the mutation present on both chromosomes for the condition to appear. Carriers are therefore phenotypically normal (i.e. their skin looks normal) and are indistinguishable from non-carriers unless genetic testing is performed. Affected animals are obvious because of the clinical skin defect (i.e. the tearing), which signals that both parents each carried a copy of the allele.

OD has been infrequently reported in various parts of the world, and although it has been recorded in the Merino, Border Leicester, Damara and Southdown breeds it appears to be most prevalent in White Dorpers. Until this case it had not been recorded in Dorpers. In this particular case, the carrier Dorper ram was the offspring of a ram that had been tested and found negative. So the ewe must have been the carrier of the mutant allele. Unfortunately the ewe is dead; it would have been interesting to test her to confirm her status.

If OD shows up in your lambs, what should you do from a flock management point of view? Remembering that it takes two copies of the mutation to express the condition in lambs and only one copy to carry it to the next generation, all rams in a commercial operation should be tested for their carrier status. If you are purchasing Dorper rams into a commercial operation, make sure the rams have been tested and certified as 'non-carriers'.

In stud situations, both rams and breeding-ewe stock should be tested and the carriers

By Dermot McNerney  
Veterinary Officer  
NSW DPI Dareton  
and

Brendan O'Rourke  
Molecular Geneticist  
EMAI, Menangle

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removed. This is a one-off test for the life of the tested animal, and the cost needs to be seen in this light.

The OD genetic test is available at the State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. Test charges range from \$36 to \$61 (including GST) for small batches. However, the laboratory is currently reviewing its charges to accommodate large batches (80 or more) so that it can reduce the price considerably.



Degloving wound caused by dermatosparaxis in a Damara lamb aged 2 weeks. Photo courtesy Colin Betts

For further information and to order supplies of test kits, email [emai.genetics@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:emai.genetics@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

For more information, contact Dermot McNerney, Veterinary Officer, Dareton on 03 5019 8411 or [dermot.mcnerney@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:dermot.mcnerney@dpi.nsw.gov.au), or Brendon O'Rourke, Molecular Geneticist, EMAI Menangle, on [emai.genetics@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:emai.genetics@dpi.nsw.gov.au)



Dermatosparaxis in a Damara lamb aged 2 weeks. Photo courtesy Colin Betts

## National Sheep Monitoring Program

By Greg Curran  
Technical Specialist  
Western Division  
NSW DPI Broken Hill

Some of you will have received reports on what chronic disease conditions were found in your sheep at abattoirs in different states. This information can help you to understand:

- some of the concerns that people buying your sheep may have
- diseases that you may not know can affect your sheep
- diseases in your sheep that can be a risk to human health.

If these diseases are not being reported, you'll know that the abattoir and buyers have bought good, healthy sheep from you.

The data available now cover abattoir inspections from 2006 to early 2012. During this period, close to 500 000 Western Division sheep were killed, and about 400 000 inspected, in 1215 lots (average 411 sheep).

As shown in the Table, the most common conditions were bladder worm, pneumonia, cheesy gland and sheep measles.

Condition	Type of condition	Darling lines clear (%)	Western lines clear (%)	Darling no. of diseased sheep per +ve line	Western no. of diseased sheep per +ve line
Bladder worm ( <i>Cysticercus tenuicollis</i> )	Larvae of tapeworm	42	35	46.9	77.8
Pneumonia/pleurisy	Infection	57	51	28.5	33
Cheesy gland (caseous lymphadenitis)	Bacterial infection	61	64	43.1	71.9
Sheep measles ( <i>Cysticercus ovis</i> )	Larvae of tapeworm	72	58	23.3	22.9
Cancer	Cancer	94	92	2	1.9
Knotty gut/pimply gut ( <i>Oesophagostomum</i> )	Roundworm	96	99.4	52.3	14.8
Liver fluke	Fluke	97	96	47.7	44
Hydatids ( <i>Echinococcus granulosus</i> )	Larvae of tapeworm	99	99.4	12.5	18.5
Sarcocysts	Protozoa	99	99.5	33.3	8.3
Grass seeds	Trauma	99.4	97	14	94.7
Lungworm	Roundworm	99.8	93	189	69
Dog bites	Trauma	100	99.7		32
OJD vaccination abscesses	Man-made	100	99.8		7

If you would like more information about these problems and how they can be managed, please email me at [greg.curran@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:greg.curran@dpi.nsw.gov.au). The South Australian Primary Industries website also has good information: [http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecuritysa/animalhealth/disease\\_surveillance/enhanced\\_abattoir\\_surveillance](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecuritysa/animalhealth/disease_surveillance/enhanced_abattoir_surveillance)

# NLIS sheep and goat reminders

By Megan Rogers  
Livestock Officer Sheep  
and Wool  
NSW DPI Forbes

Over the past year there has been a steady stream of rural media focus on the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) Sheep and Goats. From Operation Shepherd to the Victorian position on radiofrequency identification (RFID) policy, it would have been unusual for anyone not to have noticed the coverage of the topic.

Operation Shepherd saw regulatory officers visit NSW saleyards and demonstrated high levels of compliance with the current mob-based system. This is a testament to the fact that most people are trying to do the right thing in the sheep and goat industries in NSW.

NLIS is Australia's system of identifying animals and linking them with the properties on which they have run. Every person in the supply chain has responsibilities to make sure that animals are properly identified and that movements are recorded on the database.

NSW DPI conducts monitoring of how well the various players in the supply chain are complying with the NLIS. One particular problem that has been identified is the tagging of cattle with sheep RFID NLIS tags! Although this has been a fairly isolated issue, it serves as a timely reminder to all concerned to remember their obligations for:

- tagging
- movement documents
- database recording.

These are the three basic components needed for authorities to trace animals, for example when chemical residues are found.

All sheep and goats must be identified with an approved NLIS tag before they leave the property on which they are kept. This includes animals that are being moved to a saleyard, abattoir or show, between properties as part of normal management, or for agistment.

The rangeland goat industry needs to be aware of the rules relating to moving animals, particularly as part of harvesting operations. It is important to understand when an animal is considered feral, and when it is considered managed, under the NLIS.

Feral goats being consigned for slaughter directly or via a depot do not need to be tagged. Any goats that are sent to another property to be grown out or sent to a saleyard, or that have been subject to an animal husbandry procedure (e.g. tagging, drenching

or a managed breeding program) are not exempt.

The term 'rangeland', when used to describe goats from a marketing perspective, refers to where they originate, not necessarily whether they are captured from the feral state or produced from the 'managed' state. The message is: not all rangeland goats are exempt from tagging.

The goat harvesting industry is fortunate to have the only nationally-agreed tag exemption. If you abuse it, you may lose it!

The level of media coverage of the NLIS debate has kept the issue on everyone's radar. There is plenty of information on the rules and regulations that apply to sheep and goat operations in NSW. Long gone is the excuse 'I didn't know'.

**More detailed information is available at the following web address, which contains the necessary rules and regulations regarding NLIS Sheep and Goats:**

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/nlis/sheep-goats>.

**If you are in doubt, please contact someone from NSW DPI or the LHPA, or your stock agent.**



Any rangeland goat that has been subject to an animal husbandry procedure (e.g. in a managed breeding program) must be identified with an approved NLIS tag before it leaves the property on which it is kept. Rangeland goats being sent to slaughter directly or via a depot are exempt from tagging. *Photo supplied by Stephen Love*

# Talking goats in Ivanhoe

By Allie Jones  
Graduate Officer – Sheep  
and Wool  
Orange Agricultural Institute

Over 50 people travelled to John Vagg's property, 'Orana' Station, 33 km north-west of Ivanhoe, in early August to participate in a goat information day organised by NSW DPI and supported by Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA).

The idea for the day came about after Allie Jones, a graduate student with NSW DPI, researched and wrote a report featuring seven successful case studies of goat producers from the Western Division, each of whom demonstrated best practice in their respective enterprises.

The report was prepared to gain an insight into goat enterprises in western NSW and to highlight the success of the selected enterprises. The report also reviewed the current challenges and issues faced by western NSW goat production and the Australian goat meat industry. The goat information day was organised to answer some of the questions raised by producers in the report; John was one of the seven producers interviewed for the goat report.

John has been operating a Boer-cross rangeland breeding enterprise of 3000 breeding does for more than 15 years. He has been successful in establishing a thriving and profitable goat enterprise that is well suited to the semi-arid environment of western NSW. John produces goats for the export trade, and his objective is to breed a hardy and fertile animal with a high-yielding carcass.

Producers attending the goat information day at 'Orana' heard a range of presentations and were given the opportunity to be involved in practical sessions that provided information on how they could improve production within their own herds.

Presentations included an overview by John Vagg of goat production on 'Orana'. A talk on breeding and selection of goats by NSW DPI Sheep Breeding Specialist Allan Casey was complemented with a practical in-yards demonstration looking at a selection of John's breeding stock and assessing profit drivers such as structure and confirmation. NSW DPI Livestock Officer Trudie Atkinson clarified the finer points of goat National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) rules and regulations in NSW. This was followed by an in-depth discussion by Dr Stephen Love, veterinarian and State Worm Control Coordinator with NSW DPI, on managing internal parasites in goat herds in the Western Division. The day concluded with a marketing forum of industry representatives and marketing advisors being drawn together to discuss current and future marketing opportunities. This gave

participants the chance to make comments and ask questions on where the industry is heading in the future.

Key points from the day were provided by each guest speaker. Allan Casey spoke about the importance of identifying profit drivers and establishing breeding objectives within herds to increase production and profitability. Profit drivers established from discussions among the attendees included locating markets; market access and distance from markets; reproduction rate of bucks and does; quality of Boer genetics; weight gains; survivability (environmental and genetic); health (internal parasites); and temperament (travel and stress).

Producers mentioned that the driving force behind their profitability within their herds was carcass weight, as payment is made on carcass weight and dressing percentage, not live weight. Producers said that they strive to breed a goat that rears kids that grow well and can be turned off quickly.

Allan spoke about concentrating on those profit drivers that producers can change to give a positive effect on their incomes. These included reproduction rate, quality of Boer genetics, weight gain, temperament and survival.

A practical component complemented Allan's discussion. Producers and attendees viewed a small proportion of John's breeding stock in the yards, including polled, horned and older does and young 2011-drop does. John was asked to discuss what he selects for in his mobs when it comes to culling. John places a lot of emphasis on structure (e.g. deep chest, big bones and heavy muscle), as this is related to weight, which is what he is paid on. John mentioned that he is not paid on colour; therefore, he doesn't take coat colour into consideration when he is culling. However, producers commented that they believed the hairier goats don't perform as well. Producers also commented that they culled the hairier goats; they considered hair to be a processing issue because it can contaminate the meat carcass. However, John mentioned that the coat is only a seasonal issue for him, as the goats tend to drop their long coats come summer.

Allan mentioned that focus must be placed on the performance of the progeny. Selection

is a combination of traits with performance described by breeding values. Breeding values have been established for sheep, but unfortunately the goat industry is only just beginning to focus on this region. Ben Swain, a consultant contracted by MLA, commented that currently there are a select few Boer breeders who are starting to provide breeding values for their bucks. The producers can gain faster genetic progress with animals that have been assessed for their breeding values. In addition, MLA has work in the pipeline to look at buck evaluation (i.e. to assess the progeny of the bucks and not just the bucks themselves).

Allan told the crowd that you can move forward to improve the breeding progress of your herds by putting emphasis on traits that are heritable. Allan emphasised the three most important traits that put more dollars in the back pocket: weight, growth and reproduction.

Challenges for the future associated with breeding and selection in the goat industry include sourcing bucks with selection traits and breeding values and also studying the adaption issues the Boer buck faces in rangeland conditions.

Trudie Atkinson spoke about the importance of NLIS within the goat industry and abiding with the rules and regulations required to comply in NSW. Trudie mentioned that the goat harvesting industry is fortunate to have the only nationally-agreed tag exemption. It is important that producers make the system work by completing their movement documents and making sure uploads to the database are done.

Trudie discussed the difference between managed and unmanaged goats and when a goat is classified as feral and not feral. 'A feral goat is one that has been captured from a wild state, has not been born as a result of a managed breeding program, and has not been subjected to any animal husbandry procedure or treatment', she said. Feral goats being consigned for slaughter, directly or via a depot, are exempt from tagging, but they must be accompanied by a movement document (e.g. a National Vendor Declaration) and the movement must be recorded on the NLIS database.

Lunch consisted of one of the largest smorgasbords of goat cuisine ever witnessed or laid out in the Western Division! Thank you to David and Mary Booth of Buronga Organics for providing delicious organic gluten and preservative-free goat sausages and gourmet chevon pies. John Vagg gave participants the opportunity to taste a perfectly roasted side of goat – skin on and with crackle to match.

Dr Stephen Love, NSW DPI Veterinarian and State Coordinator – Internal Parasites, spoke about

managing internal parasites in the Western Division. Stephen began his discussion by pointing out how important it is to do a faecal worm egg count (WEC, 'WormTest') before drenching your goats. This prevents wasting money on drench and adding to the issues of drench-resistant worms in the Western Division. The bottom line is not to guess if your goats are carrying significant numbers of internal parasites. Instead, WormTest!

Goats carry the same worms as sheep, the most important being barber's pole worm, small brown stomach worm, and black scour worm.

Stephen mentioned that there is little information on what worms cost the Western Division rangelands in dollars and production losses, as they occur sporadically.

Producers in the Western Division face the challenge of less-than-perfect postal services: if a producer sends a WormTest away it can be 3 or 4 days before it reaches the lab at Menangle. This time frame is less than optimal but OK if the samples don't get too warm in transit. Stephen suggested that learning how to do your own on-farm WECs may be an alternative in future.

Also discussed was the importance of getting to know not just drench brand names, but the active ingredients in drenches and the families to which they belong. This is because, to manage drench resistance, it is important to rotate between different families, not just using drenches from the one family all the time.

Even better than rotating is to use combinations of unrelated drenches (i.e. from different families), although this can be more expensive. Although Stephen recommends using combinations of unrelated chemicals with broad-spectrum activity, unfortunately many of these are not registered for use in goats. Examples of two of the few drenches registered for use in goats are abamectin (Capprimec®) and benzimidazole (BZ) drenches such as Valbazen®.

Registered veterinarians can prescribe off-label use of sheep drenches in goats, but it can be difficult to accurately calculate the withholding period with a view to avoiding residue violations in goats at slaughter.

As well as efficacy and residue issues, safety has to be considered as well. Goats are more sensitive to toxicity than sheep when it comes to some of the drenches used for sheep. This is especially the case if, in order to achieve



The above report can be obtained by contacting Department of Primary Industries graduate student Allie Jones on 02 6391 3816, or email [allie.jones@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:allie.jones@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

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acceptable drench efficacy, a dose rate higher than that used in sheep is prescribed.

Drench resistance is a big issue and is not just a problem of sheep and goats in higher rainfall areas of eastern NSW, where resistance is very common. With the exception of the newest drench on the market, Zolvix® (monepantel), all currently available drenches are affected to some degree by resistance.

Stephen also emphasised the importance of giving an effective 'quarantine drench' to bucks or other goats or sheep on arrival and placing them in quarantine paddocks. Currently the best quarantine drench consists of four unrelated actives, one of which should be Zolvix®. In practice, this might mean drenching imported animals with Zolvix®, followed immediately by a triple-combination drench such as Pyrimide®, Hatrick®, Triguard® or similar.

Stephen's key points are to effectively quarantine-drench imported stock, use a combination of drenches if possible, and rotate between drench families. Check the effectiveness of drenches by doing a worm egg count 10 to 14 days after drenching. Control exposure to internal parasites by avoiding set stocking, and monitor your stock's worm egg count and body condition. Check for signs of worminess, such as anaemia and scours.

Blair Brice, MLA Goat Meat Industry Development Manager, gave producers a rundown of the prospects and projects in the pipeline for the 5-year Australian goat industry RD and E (Research, Development and Extension) strategy. Just a few of these projects include preparation of rangeland goats for live export, a nutritional analysis of goat meat, an evaluation of the genetic basis of horns and its relationship with intersex goats, and the efficacy of the goat drenches currently on the market. The program is funded by grower levies, and producers are encouraged to obtain a copy from MLA.

John Vagg spoke about his goat breeding program during the Goat Information Day that was held on his property 'Orana', near Ivanhoe. The photo shows John discussing what he selects for in his mobs to improve performance. Allan Casey, Technical Specialist – Breeding, NSW DPI, is also in the yard; he emphasised the importance of selecting traits such as weight, growth and reproduction, as they influence profitability. Allan said that the focus must be on the performance of the progeny. *Photo supplied by Trudie Atkinson*



The final presentation consisted of an overview from a number of market representatives, including Alick Scott (Goat Buyer and representative from T&R Pastoral Company), Ian Sanders (Export Advisor for NSW Trade & Investment), David Booth (a producer who supplies the domestic market), and Blair Brice from MLA. Each of the goat meat industry representatives were asked to give a brief, 10-minute presentation highlighting the market's current situation, where the industry is heading, and the opportunities that exist.

Alick Scott commented that goat meat is trading quite nicely at the moment. Prices are good owing to low supplies of mutton. Alick also noted that there is room for the domestic market to grow, but that the inconsistent supply of Boer-cross carcasses makes it hard to sustain a market and a premium for the product. The Boer cross is placed in shipments mixed with rangeland carcasses. The biggest driver facing the domestic market is supply and demand.

Ian Sanders believed that the goat-meat market would increase owing to the current and future world demand for protein. He noted that several markets have plans to increase food security (e.g. Russia will invest \$366 million in sheep and goat development to 2020).

David Booth of Buronga Organics supplies the domestic market with 70 Boer-cross carcasses a week into Canberra. David commented that the issue with goat meat is that it is not eaten on a regular basis. Moreover, the market requires a consistent product.

Blair Brice finished the day by giving an overview of what MLA is doing to improve and increase the capacity of the domestic industry. This includes trade-development events, food media promotion, and paddock-to-plate workshops. The single largest hurdle the domestic market faces is the consumer's perception of goat meat at the domestic level. Blair confirmed that MLA now has data on the nutritional composition of goat meat; this means that food labels can now be placed on the product when it is sold, thus displaying its beneficial health qualities. He concluded that there was significant room for the domestic market to grow, particularly in the food service industry. However, the biggest constraint facing the domestic market is consistent supply.

At the conclusion of the program, attendees were treated to a copy of the case studies written by NSW DPI graduate student Allie Jones (see report details on pg21).

**For details about the day, contact the organiser, NSW DPI Livestock Officer Trudie Atkinson, at Trangie. Phone 02 6880 8041.**

# Western Lands Advisory Council Communiqué

**The 24th meeting of the Western Lands Advisory Council was held in Cobar on 10 May 2012.**

The Advisory Council members were given eight presentations at the meeting, so members had plenty of information to take back to their various organisations.

The members were pleased to have the recently appointed Deputy Director General Catchments and Lands, Ms Renata Brooks, who is based in Orange, attend the meeting. Ms Brooks provided a brief overview of the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services (DTIRIS or NSW Trade & Investment).

DTIRIS is a very diverse portfolio that is considered to be the State's economic development agency. It delivers a broad range of government services, including regulatory and compliance work; research and development; education; advisory services; business development; grant provision; policy development and advice; and commercial products such as timber and soil conservation services.

Mr Graham Harding, General Manager Crown Lands, NSW DPI, Newcastle, whose attendance is always welcomed, addressed the members on the Corporate Plan for Crown Lands, including key performance indicators, particularly service delivery and integrating priorities. Cabinet approval has been sought for major reforms within Crown Lands to remove impediments to service delivery. A new model will be introduced soon.

Crown Lands is also working with the NSW Aboriginal Land Council to review the *NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*. The coordinating Minister for DTIRIS is the Hon Andrew Stoner, Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services.

Mr Ben Allen of the Vertebrate Pest Research Unit, NSW DPI, Broken Hill, spoke to the Advisory Council about wild dog management, which is a major issue. In conjunction with Australian Wool Innovation, NSW DPI is running wild dog management workshops in various locations in the Western Division. Very positive

feedback on the workshops is being received from landholders.

The Advisory Council members were told of the benefits of para-aminopropiophenone (PAPP), a new chemical poison developed for use on foxes and wild dogs. PAPP complements the currently used sodium fluoroacetate ('1080') by providing an alternative poison for places where there are risks to people and domestic animals. It is especially useful in such situations, because there is an antidote that can be given to farm dogs that are accidentally poisoned.

It is important to note that 'organic' properties seeking to export to the USA may not use 1080 without approval from their organic certifier; they may be penalised if they do not obtain that approval.

The availability of PAPP for fox and wild dog control is critical to addressing the continued decline of the sheep and goat industries in Western NSW and elsewhere around Australia.

Wild dog problems are rapidly increasing in our region, and there is an urgent need for changes to legislation to enable various tools (e.g. M44 ejectors) and poisons (e.g. PAPP) to be made accessible to individual landholders to help with ongoing wild dog and dingo management and control.

The legislation for PAPP needs to enable it to be registered as a 'Schedule 6 Chemical' by regulatory authorities. This would allow easier access to the chemical, and it would then be available at more outlets.

The Advisory Council has written to the authority responsible, namely the APVMA (Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority) in Canberra, as well as to the relevant Federal Ministers, asking that the registration of products containing PAPP be fast-tracked to address the rapidly increasing wild dog predation in the sheep production lands of Western NSW. It is understood that this registration has been in the pipeline for a number of years.

Mr John Tracey (Manager, Invasive Species Programs, Invasive Species Branch, NSW DPI Orange) also spoke to the Advisory Council about wild dog management.

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**The main points of Mr Tracy's presentation were:**

- A community approach to managing wild dogs is essential, as wild dogs are a shared problem and are dispersed across all land tenures; collaborative solutions are required to deal with this issue.
- Landholders are responsible for the control/management/eradication of pests (including wild dogs) on their properties, and a lack of landholder participation is the biggest threat to effective control. This can be an issue, as some landholders are not aware that they have a wild dog issue, and there are also absentee landholders.
- It is important to consider regional landscapes, and the movement of dogs, with cooperation and consistency between wild dog associations, particularly in relation to control actions and monitoring. Isolated actions are less effective than a unified approach.

Members were updated on the various management plans, monitoring methods and control methods used.

Mr and Mrs Ben and Liarne Mannix from Bourke gave a presentation from a landholder's perspective of how they have been affected by wild dogs and how they have implemented control and management. They played a major role in the formation of the Ledknapper Wild Dog Action Group Inc., which was formed in February 2008 as a direct result of the escalating wild dog activity in the north-west part of NSW. The Ledknapper Group has been campaigning for wild dog control in the Western Division and to date can account for approximately 130 wild dogs since January 2008. They have received funding from several organisations for their baiting programs, and it is critical to their success that there is group participation and coordination.

Mr Ken Harrison, General Manager of the Western CMA, gave an update on the Western Catchment Action Plan Review – 2012. The current Catchment Action Plan (CAP) is based on the previous Catchment Management Board's 2003 blueprint, which runs from 2006 to 2016 and is now due for a midterm review. The new CAP will be 'recast' for 10 years and will incorporate some changes. The basic principles of the CAP are to keep the basis of the 'old' CAP and to base the review on what worked and what didn't; incorporate resilience assessment; refine targets into what is measurable; deal only with issues that the CMA can influence; incorporate carbon issues; and

address the Natural Resource Commission's framework.

A CAP provides high-level strategic targets to guide investment in natural resource management over the long term (5 to 10 years).

Mr Brian Boyle, Chief Executive Officer of the Game Council of NSW, based in Orange, addressed the Advisory Council and outlined the role and functions of the Game Council.

The Game Council was established in 2002 under the provisions of the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002* and is a small, but highly politicised, organisation within NSW DPI.

**The objectives of the Game Council are:**

- to provide for the effective management of introduced species of game animals
- to promote responsible and orderly hunting of game animals on public and private lands and of certain pest animals on public lands.

The vision of the Game Council is to be the leading promoter, educator and advocate of Volunteer Conservation Hunting. In this role, the Council continues to develop a comprehensive range of education programs to make sure that all licensed hunters are hunting safely, legally and ethically.

The Game Council is also developing networks and strategies for working on its own, or cooperatively with NSW Police and landholders, in an effort to eliminate illegal hunting and associated rural crime, which is always an ongoing problem.

Mr Des Jones, representing the interests of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) and a resident of Wentworth (Western Lands Advisory Council membership pending), addressed the Advisory Council on the role of the NSWALC.

There are nine Land Council Regions in NSW, and the core business of the NSWALC is Land Rights and Land Rights issues. The NSWALC, as an organisation, is reviewed every 5 years, and all Local Land Councils must submit reports.

The NSWALC is the state's peak representative body in Aboriginal Affairs and aims to protect the interests, and further the aspirations of, its members and the broader Aboriginal community. It also provides advice to the relevant Minister and the government on matters relating to Aboriginal persons. It acts as an advisor to, and negotiates with, governments and other stakeholders to ensure the preservation of Aboriginal land rights.

**The objectives of the NSWALC are:**

- to improve, protect and foster the best interests of Aboriginal persons within NSW

- to relieve poverty, sickness, suffering, distress, misfortune, destitution and helplessness of Aboriginal persons within NSW.

**Other points the Advisory Council members were updated on were:**

- The guidelines for eligibility to apply for Natural Disaster Funding to include the Unincorporated Area and 'Other Statutory Organisations' (such as the Wild Dog Destruction Board, NSW Aboriginal Land Council and NPWS) have been referred to the Expenditure Review Committee. In the short term, the NSW Treasurer has approved an 'interim accommodation' that enables these organisations to lodge applications for Natural Disaster Relief Funding to repair the damage caused by the windstorms and floods that have occurred over the past 3 years.
- The Legal Roads Network Project Team has completed the mapping of the roads in Bourke Shire and half the roads in Bogan Shire. Currently about 30% of roads in the Cobar Shire are in the system.
- The Wilcox Report into the mining issues of concern in the Lightning Ridge area was generally well received. The majority of the recommendations are considered to be good and workable. The Division of Resources and Energy (part of NSW Trade & Investment) has started to implement

reforms or recommendations that can be implemented without reference to Ministerial level. The proposed reforms and recommendations have not yet been signed off on.

- The Western Division Range Condition Assessment Program (WDRCAP) has started, with positive feedback being received from landholders. The WDRCAP has a target of 140 inspections to be completed each year, being 70 nominated properties and 70 other properties. At the end of March 2012, thirty-eight of the 70 nominated properties and 79 other properties had been inspected. Owing to heavy rain and flooding, the collection of biomass photostandards has been a slower than expected process. The results for Balranald, Bourke and the Unincorporated Area are still being compiled, with Wentworth to be the next area. All Resource Management Officers' reports, maps and photographs are being stored in a central electronic database in Dubbo. The biomass raw data and photostandards are also being stored in a central electronic database, with restricted access to maintain security.

The next meeting of the Western Lands Advisory Council will held in Cobar on 23 October 2012.

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

*Advertorial*

# Protecting your flock against arthritis

**A**rthritis in lambs can be a real pain – both in your animals and in your hip pocket. Lambs that are infected with bacterial arthritis may need to be culled on farm, discounted in the saleyard or condemned at the abattoir, reducing the profitability of your enterprise.

Bacterial arthritis can be caused by a number of different types of bacteria, including *Erysipelas*. This bacterium commonly lives in the soil and in the tonsils and nostrils of ewes. When the lamb has an open wound, such as the navel at birth, or after marking, the bacteria can enter through the wound, into the bloodstream, and infect one or more joints. These joints become swollen, sore and painful, restricting the lamb's ability to move and graze and reducing its productivity. Some of these lambs are so severely affected that they need to be culled. Arthritis is also one of the main

causes of carcase condemnation in lambs, reducing your returns from the saleyards or the abattoir.

Erysipelas arthritis can be controlled by using Eryvac<sup>®</sup>, a vaccine designed to be used in ewes pre-lambing to protect their lambs through the colostrum (first milk). This means that the lamb will be able to fight off infection from birth through to marking, when the lamb is most at risk of contracting the disease.

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\*Erysipelas is one of a number of causes of arthritis in sheep.

1. Graham Lean & Associates (2009). Cost benefit analysis of Eryvac in commercial sheep flocks. Pfizer data on file.



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## Natural disaster relief and recovery grants

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A \$15 000 grant can be accessed for clean-up and recovery activities from the 2012 rainfall and flood event. These activities can include replacement of damaged equipment and general repairs to roads and fences.

Application forms can be obtained by calling the NSW Rural Assistance Authority on **1800 678 593** or via the website [www.raa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au)

**THE DEADLINE IS 31 OCTOBER 2012.**



A \$15 000 grant can be accessed by people living in the Central Darling Shire for general repairs to roads. *Photo by Sally Ware*

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