



Local Land
Services
Riverina

Local Annual Report 2015



Contents

Foreword	1
Riverina region at a glance	2
2015 local achievements	3
Local Land Services goals	4
Resilient, self-reliant and prepared local communities	5
Biosecure, profitable, productive and sustainable primary industries	6
Healthy, diverse, connected natural environments	8
In our community	9
Case studies	
Malleefowl recovery project	10
Aerial Surveys prove effective	11
Traditional burning returns to the Riverina	12
Lucerne online	13
Office locations	14

Published by the Local Land Services
First published March 2016
ISBN: 978-0-9945521-1-2

Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of the report January 2015 to December 2015. However, 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 Local Land Services or the user's independent adviser.

© State of New South Wales through Local Land Services 2016.

Foreword

“Delivering relevant and valued services to our customers.” That is how we do business.

The focus for 2015 was the establishment of the operating model to deliver services to you, our customers. Our model aligns the needs of local communities to the skills of staff working and living in them. Programs and services are designed following consultation with Community Advisory Groups, local community, and stakeholder groups. This resulted in over 260 applications for either grant funding or advisory services following our program launch at the 2015 Henty Field Days.

Innovation continues to be an important part in how we operate as evidenced by our leading edge pest animal aerial survey in the Hay area, wild dog collaring project in the highlands area, Lucerne online, and the use of “pop-up” shops to promote Riverina Local Land Services and provide service delivery where it is needed.

Financially Riverina Local Land Services is in a strong position and operating within our financial budgets. Our external funding from both the NSW and Australian Government has seen over \$3 million invested in managing and protecting our natural resources through the provision of grant funding and building the capability of land managers through the provision of advisory services. Rates funding continues to be utilised in undertaking preventative measures for biosecurity risks including surveillance activities, providing livestock health and management advice, and providing proactive pest management advice.

On the safety front, we remain absolutely committed to providing a healthy and safe working environment for our employees, our contractors and our visitors. This focus is ongoing, with more work to be done in the year ahead to continue to improve our safety performance and culture.

I thank the Board Members and our Management Team for your leadership and support and all employees for your dedication and hard work. I also take this opportunity to thank our customers and stakeholders and our Community Advisory Groups for your continued support and valuable feedback.

With your continued collaboration and support Riverina Local Land Services will become a trusted provider of relevant and valued services.

Rob Kelly
General Manager



Riverina region at a glance



Riverina Local Land Services is bounded by Harden in the east, Hay in the west, Hillston in the north and Lockhart in the south. The area covers around 67,000 square kilometres (6.7 million hectares) of land and is serviced by 17 Local Governments with more than 166,000 people. Wagga Wagga is the largest centre in the Riverina Local Land Services region with a population of more than 62,000 people.

The Murrumbidgee River winds through the region and is the second largest river of the Murray-Darling system. The word Murrumbidgee means 'big water' in the Wiradjuri language.

There are six unique landscapes in the Riverina Local Land Services region which are consistent with how communities relate to their landscape:

- Rangelands
- Irrigation Areas
- Riverina Plains
- Murrumbidgee
- South West Slopes
- South West Highlands.

Land use in the Riverina Local Land Services area is mainly agricultural with dry land grazing and cereal based cropping accounting for more than 80 per cent of land use. Irrigation farming in the region covers more than five per cent of the area.

Many natural assets of international and national importance are found in the area serviced by Riverina Local Land Services.

Communities in the Riverina region see agricultural production as important to the country's food security and work toward being resilient to climate variability and the changing economy.

2015 local achievements

125

PROPERTY VISITS
BY VETS AND
BIOSECURITY OFFICERS



90

GENERAL CONSULTATIONS BY
VETS AND BIOSECURITY OFFICERS

85,496

HECTARES OF TRAVELLING STOCK
RESERVE MANAGED



413

LIVESTOCK EXPORT
CERTIFICATES ISSUED



2,384

PARTICIPANTS AT
TRAINING EVENTS



10,028

HECTARES PROTECTED THROUGH
VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS

892

FARM VISITS
INVESTIGATING DISEASES



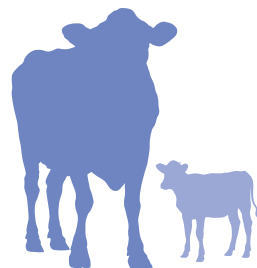
1.6 M

HECTARES BAITED
FOR FOXES



226

SALEYARD INSPECTIONS



526

WALKING PERMITS
ISSUED FOR MOVING
STOCK

Local Land Services goals

Local Land Services aligns all of its work with its mission of being a customer-focused business that enables improved primary production and better management of natural resources. The strategic direction of Local Land Services is summarised in four organisational goals.

Resilient,
self-reliant and
prepared local
communities

Biosecure, profitable,
productive and
sustainable primary
industries

Healthy, diverse,
connected
natural
environments

Board members
and staff who are
collaborative,
innovative and
commercially-focused

Local Land Services statewide goals



The operations of the Riverina Local Land Services are aligned and integrated with the four state-wide goals of Local Land Services. The Riverina Local Strategic Plan describes each area of operation and outlines key strategies and activities that will achieve each state-wide goal.

Resilient, self-reliant and prepared local communities

Agricultural production

Riverina Local Land Services has worked with land managers to apply best management practices for sustainable grazing and pasture management.

The main activity undertaken was the establishment of stock management areas (SMA), protecting 8,975 ha of land. Stock management areas enable land managers to monitor ground cover percentage, which is the extent of bare earth in pastures.

Once groundcover falls below 50 per cent, stock is removed from paddocks and placed into the SMA, thus preserving the remaining groundcover. By preserving groundcover, it prevents erosion by wind and water, preserves soil structure and enables quicker recovery of pastures once environmental conditions return to normal.

An integral part of the program was the training provided to land managers in the feeding and watering of livestock under intensive management conditions.

Emergency management and natural disaster relief

During 2015, Riverina Local Land Services updated its emergency management plan, risk profile and concept of operations in conjunction with NSW Department of Primary Industries to ensure we are well prepared for emergency and natural disasters.

Riverina Local Land Services maintained training across all staff with 100 per cent of the emergency response team being trained to the applied level. All biosecurity staff have completed at least the introductory level and 34 have completed up to the applied level. Riverina participated in three scenarios to ensure training and education was put into practice in preparation for an event. Further training will be completed in 2016.

Delivering relevant and valued services to our customers is central to our business.

There were no significant emergencies in the Riverina during 2015 however a piggery fire was attended. Staff also assisted with state responses to the red imported fire ant response sending six staff and the banana freckle response in Queensland sending two staff to assist in the local emergency centre.

One staff member participated in the yellow dragon, a plant health exercise with the citrus industry in Camden, Sydney.

A local flood simulation exercise was run in Leeton in June with all Riverina Local Land Service staff with dedicated emergency roles and responsibilities. A further emergency animal disease exercise was held for veterinarians in November to ensure a swift response to an emergency could be staged.

Aboriginal communities

Riverina Local Land Services is currently implementing a pilot project utilising the skills of the local Wiradjuri community to undertake site assessments on Travelling Stock Reserves.

The assessors locate sites of cultural significance on TSRs and make recommendations if the sites are in danger of damage or desecration.

The pilot project is a two-fold success; it has identified important areas of local culture and provided employment opportunities for local community members.

Riverina Local Land Services engaged Wiradjuri community members to assist with traditional burning on specific TSRs that have a high weed load. The community members were trained in partnership with the BRACS program run by the Rural Fire Service.

As a result community members have joined local volunteer bushfire brigades in their local area.

A successful traditional burn on the Tooyal Hall TSR was carried out in October 2015, with plans for another four burns in Autumn 2016.

Biosecure, profitable, productive and sustainable primary industries

Biosecurity and livestock health

Riverina Local Land Services works closely with producers and industry to ensure biosecurity risks are monitored and managed to minimize the impact of agriculture and international market access.

During 2015 Riverina Local Land Services conducted 125 consultations and 892 visits to farms for livestock related disease investigations for lameness, including footrot, and met 40 of the 41 KPIs for the Animal Biosecurity Business Plan.

To control the movement of stock, Riverina Local Land Services monitors the National Livestock Identification Scheme for compliance by undertaking saleyard audits and inspections, and completed 226 inspections across four saleyards, including the largest saleyard in NSW, at Wagga Wagga.

Some 413 livestock export certificates were issued from the Riverina during 2015 ensuring our stock are free from livestock health and disease problems.

To protect market access, Riverina Local Land Services manages the Property Identification Scheme (PIC) and note that an additional 225 PICs were created in 2015 and 1,376 were modified at the request of land managers.

The significant citrus, cherry and apple industries were protected through an innovative fruit fly awareness campaign. Industry funds supported Riverina Local Land Services efforts in monitoring fruit fly, and together with NSW Department of Primary Industries, carried out a successful program over the summer fruiting season.

During December, the Riverina Regional Weeds Committee met for the first time to discuss the new arrangements in place following the Natural Resources Commission's review into weed management in NSW.

Maintaining travelling stock reserves

Riverina Local Land Services currently manages 85,496 ha of travelling stock routes and reserves. The reserve network is a mixture of small fenced reserves less than 100 acres in size in eastern Riverina and larger unfenced reserves and routes in western Riverina.

Mobs of travelling stock are common throughout the Riverina with 526 walking permits issued in 2015 for stock movements.

The Riverina travelling stock reserve network supports a diverse range of both agricultural and environmental activity. A number of reserves have been managed for conservation outcomes under property vegetation plans.

Numerous reserves are utilised by the public for passive recreation activities including bushwalking, bird-watching and fishing. The Riverina travelling stock reserve network also supports a large number of apiarists.

Riverina Local Land Services is currently undertaking a pilot project which is using the skills of the local Wiradjuri community to undertake Aboriginal Cultural Heritage site assessments on 110 travelling stock reserves.

Some of our achievements include:

- 426 walking permits issued
- 110 Travelling Stock Reserves assessed for Aboriginal cultural heritage.





Pest animal and insect control

During 2015 Riverina Local Land Services conducted pest control programs across four vertebrate pests, rabbits, wild dogs, foxes and feral pigs as well as verifying low level activities of Australian plague locusts in central Riverina. Over 2,147 land managers participated in these programs controlling pests and insects across 1,708,906 ha.

Rabbits programs covered 213,232 ha predominantly in the eastern and western districts of Riverina Local Land Services. Early summer rain prevented more control being undertaken in the western district. Preparations are underway for large scale release of the new strain of calicivirus for rabbit control, RHDV 5, in 2016.

Riverina Local Land Services embarked on an innovative project using 4K ultra high definition video imagery recorded and GPS tracking of rabbit warrens and damage across 122,000 ha. The 42 hours of flight time covered an area that would take ground survey 6.5 years to complete showing significant efficiencies. This project has resulted in individual farm maps being produced for local control using ripping, baiting and restoration.

Wild dog baiting programs increased in 2015, particularly in the Autumn with more than 35,000 ha covered by baiting programs. This will increase in 2016 and beyond with the planned introduction of a three year aerial baiting program in the Riverina highlands.

Fox baiting doubled in area baited and active participants in 2015. This was largely due to the innovative Feral Fighters program offering incentives to landholders to participate. More than 1,600,000 ha was baited for foxes in 2015.

Feral pig baiting was undertaken over 10,000 ha. This is expected to increase dramatically in the coming years as a number of community based feral pig management groups were set up during 2015.

Healthy, diverse, connected natural environments

Natural resource management

Riverina Local Land Services has engaged with land managers, stakeholders and investors to sustain agricultural production and to protect natural resource base assets.

Key focuses of on-ground works and community grant support in 2015 have resulted in the following:

- 88 voluntary conservation agreements
- 10,028 ha protected and conserved for biodiversity enhancement
- 8,975 ha received support for measures to better manage sustainable grazing.

Support actions from Riverina Local Land Services helped to protect and enhance native vegetation remnants and to extend connective corridors.

Conservation works protected soil structure, reduced weed infestation and significantly contributed to maintaining and increasing habitat for a range of threatened species and endangered plant and animal ecosystems.

Examples of supported works included planting native vegetation, establishing stock management areas for ground cover management, fencing of remnant areas and waterways to protect soil stability.

Native vegetation

The management of native vegetation forms a significant part of Riverina Local Land Services support and funding to land managers and community groups striving to increase and enhance the area of native vegetation in the local landscape.

During 2015 Riverina Local Land Services achieved the following major outcomes in native vegetation:

- 133 ha planted to riparian native species
- 12 ha of riparian protected by fencing
- 131 ha of newly planted native vegetation.

Sound management of native vegetation to rehabilitate, enhance and protect remnants and to increase the area of native vegetation in the landscape is a key objective for land managers in the Riverina.

With better knowledge and improved land management techniques, soil is protected by native vegetation to reduce its susceptibility to erosion. Native vegetation is also critical for maintaining and improving habitat for a large number of threatened flora and fauna species and for sustaining the health and function of local ecosystems.

Some of our achievements include:

- 1.6 million hectares baited for foxes, double the previous year
- 122,000 hectares of private holdings aerially surveyed and mapped for rabbit infestations
- 692 hectares of wetland protected by fencing.





Eliz Braddon from Young, is the team leader of our animal biosecurity and welfare team. She guides the other district vets and biosecurity officers in developing priorities and providing services that protect local producers from the impact of endemic and exotic diseases.

She has 14 years of experience in emergency management, such as the Young avian influenza outbreak, ensuring her team is ready for emergencies by coordinating regular exercises for her team to hone their skills in this vital area.

Her wide experience is used at the state level as she is a member of the NSW Minister for Primary Industries Advisory council and at the local level as an ambassador for Local Land Service at Agricultural Inspiration camps where she talks to high school students about career paths in agriculture.

In our community

Malleefowl recovery project

The challenge

Formerly widespread throughout mainland Australia, the Malleefowl (*Leipoa ocellata*) is currently listed as endangered in NSW under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. Fragmentation of habitat through land clearing and predation by introduced pest animals such as foxes and feral cats, have seen the Malleefowl retreat into the last viable remnants of the mallee and mulga woodlands.

Work undertaken

Donato Environmental Services developed a Malleefowl management plan for the North Yalgogrin site. As a result 12 motion detector cameras were deployed at active and inactive mounds, water points and known Malleefowl locations to assist with monitoring. Land managers attended fox baiting/1080 training with more than 10,000 ha being covered as part of a fox baiting management plan. The National Malleefowl Recovery Team (NMRT) trained twelve land managers/volunteers how to monitor malleefowl mounds and upload data onto the NMRT data base. Community awareness articles have been published and landholder meetings are conducted quarterly.

Benefits

- 1080 training and fox baiting plans assist Malleefowl survival as well as reducing lamb deaths
- awareness of habitat protection and improvement
- survey and monitoring of the Malleefowl activity
- working with land managers has opened opportunities for the recovery of the Malleefowl through education/information sessions
- collaboration with National Malleefowl Recovery Team
- future tourism opportunities.

Location

- Site one at North Yalgogrin, located 40 km west of West Wyalong
- Site two located on the Tallimba/West Wyalong Road 11 km south-west of West Wyalong
- Site three located near Alleena 20 km south of West Wyalong.



Key achievement

Through community awareness programs, there has been increased land manager participation in the protection of the Malleefowl. A fox baiting group has been formed and volunteers have been trained how to monitor mounds.

In collaboration with

- Land managers
- National Malleefowl Recovery Team
- Lake Cowal Foundation
- Bland Shire Council

“It’s great to see Riverina Local Land Service staff being so actively involved in the Malleefowl Recovery Project; it would be such a shame if the Malleefowl were to become extinct in the local area.”

- Land manager, Peter Wood

Aerial Surveys prove effective

The challenge

Broad acre properties and the landscape of the Hay plains made pest inspections difficult. Rabbits had remained a persistent problem despite considerable effort over many decades. The problem was widespread across the Hay and Carrathool region and needed a clear, coordinated management strategy to be implemented.

Work undertaken

Six and a half years of land survey work was done in less than six days when aerial surveys were undertaken by Riverina Local Land Services to accurately quantify and map 122,000 ha of private holdings for rabbit infestations.

With recent advances in aerial surveying a helicopter equipped with state of the art photographic equipment and GPS referencing was able to complete the task in 42 flight hours.

Benefits

- An accurate representation of the density and distribution of rabbits has enabled strategic and targeted pest control programs to be developed.
- Land managers gained valuable information from individual maps for future planning of vertebrate pest and African boxthorn control as well as identifying areas of high conservation value.
- Data collected has proved integral to attracting funding for further work across the region.
- The study has provided a reference point for monitoring progress of pest control and conservation efforts into the future.
- Increased community awareness and engagement with land managers about pest animals and their impact on Endangered Ecological Communities in the region.

Location

- From Carrathool, south to Four Corners, and west to Glencoe Road on the southern side of the Murrumbidgee River.



Key achievement

The survey has enabled a strategic, coordinated rabbit management plan to be developed across 122,000 ha of the worst affected area within the Riverina Local Land Services region.

The spatial representation of rabbit density and distribution has attracted additional funding from multiple sources to support landholders with their control strategies.

“Having just seen the maps produced by the aerial mapping survey, it has reiterated the importance of rabbit and boxthorn control. It will be a great tool for landholders and government departments in planning and control programs”

- James Ives of Glencoe

Traditional burning returns to the Riverina

The challenge

Riverina Local Land Services is responsible for the care and maintenance of more than 86,000 ha of travelling stock reserves. Some reserves have significant environmental and cultural values which are impacted through weeds and biomass build-up. At times conventional management techniques do not work so adaptation is required.

Work undertaken

Riverina Local Land Services established a cultural burn team consisting of Wiradjuri community members from Wagga, Narrandera and Hay. The team of eight received Rural Fire Service Bushfire Management accreditation, attended a national bushfire conference, learnt cultural burning techniques from Aboriginal elders and have culturally burnt 25 ha of native woodland on two travelling stock reserves. Methods will be refined and applied as an adaptive land management tool.

Benefits

- Greater sharing of traditional skills and knowledge in local communities.
- Strong partnerships through hands on experience in bushfire management and cultural burning.
- Encourages natural regeneration, controls weeds without relying on chemicals and reduces bushfire hazard.
- Outstanding woodland response to cultural burning. Especially in promoting seeding of native grasses.
- Diversifies Local Land Services land management techniques.
- Opportunity to monitor ecological response through trial plots and improve methods over time.

Location

- Tooyal Hall travelling stock reserve, 30 km north-west of Wagga Wagga



Key achievement

Applying cultural burning as an adaptive land management tool has proven to be valuable for the health of the environment but also for the health of our local community. This program has forged strong bonds between land managers, Aboriginal communities and local Rural Fire Service brigades.

In collaboration with

- NSW Rural Fire Service
- Local Aboriginal community
- Local farming community

"This is the first time I have seen a cultural burn done in the Riverina. I feel so privileged to be here and so very positive about the future,"
- Wiradjuri burn team member
Graham Traynor

Lucerne online

The challenge

There was an enormous amount of information on lucerne available, but a gap was identified in addressing grower concerns about establishment as a perennial species and subsequent removal prior to a cropping phase. The challenge was to pull everything together into a vocational learning product that land managers could study over 1-2 days, self-paced and in their own farming environment. Learning assessments are based on an actual or potential lucerne paddock on their farm.

Work undertaken

Lucerne online was planned as a new initiative to extend current knowledge and research on lucerne, and its inclusion in farming systems.

A volume of information on lucerne was condensed by industry experts from research and extension fields.

Riverina Local Land Services identified the challenge of extending the information was an opportunity for a co-ordinated response and a new project – Lucerne online.

Benefits

- The course is written by three skilled professionals.
- The course is underpinned by the extensive knowledge of experienced lucerne-growers.
- Land managers can study at home on the farm without the need for travel.
- On completion of the course participants will be more confident about establishing, managing and removing lucerne and land managers may incorporate lucerne into their farming system.
- The online course is self-paced and allows for different learning styles.

Key achievement

Lucerne online is a short course on lucerne management. It has been developed for farmers and graziers, livestock producers and managers of lucerne. The course has been developed as an online learning tool that captures existing knowledge and grower experiences.

In collaboration with

- Tocal College
- NSW Department of Primary Industries
- Central West Local Land Services
- Technical specialists:
Mary-Anne Lattimore
Rob Wilson
- Land managers across NSW and Queensland

Location

- The course is delivered online, allowing participants to undertake the course from home, at a time that suits them.



“I learnt a lot doing the course and also from the extra support and advice provided, it was greatly appreciated. I am really interested in agronomy and the science behind it”
- Jarrod Koch (course graduate)

Office locations

Regional Office

Building 24
Darnell Smith Drive
Charles Sturt University
Wagga Wagga
Ph: (02) 6923 6300
admin.riverina@lls.nsw.gov.au

Coleambally

39 Brolga Place
Coleambally NSW 2707
Ph: (02) 6954 4650
Fax: (02) 6954 4420

Cootamundra

87 Cooper Street
PO Box 189
Cootamundra NSW 2590
Ph: (02) 6940 2944
Fax: (02) 6940 2941

Griffith

Farm 217
Murray Road
Hanwood NSW 2680
Ph: (02) 6960 1300
Fax: (02) 6963 0255
PO Box 1087
Griffith NSW 2680

Gundagai

87 Sheridan Street
PO Box 21
Gundagai NSW 2722
Ph: (02) 6940 6900
Fax: (02) 6944 1867

Harden

Harden Shire Council
East Street
PO Box 145
Harden NSW 2587
Ph: (02) 6386 3954
Fax: (02) 6386 2083

Hay

56 Lachlan Street
PO Box 21
Hay NSW 2711
Ph: (02) 6990 1300
Fax: (02) 6993 3497

Henty

27 Sladen Street
PO Box 55
Henty NSW 2658
Ph: (02) 6929 3555
Fax: (02) 6929 3566

Leeton

Relocated to Yanco

Narrandera

8 Bolton Street
PO Box 11
Narrandera NSW 2700
Ph: (02) 6958 1800
Fax: (02) 6959 3077

Temora

159 Hoskins Street
PO Box 393
Temora NSW 2666
Ph: (02) 6977 3302

Tumut

64 Fitzroy Street
PO Box 3
Tumut NSW 2720
Ph: (02) 6941 1400
Fax: (02) 6947 4149

West Wyalong

31-33 Main Street
PO Box 213
West Wyalong NSW 2671
Ph: (02) 6970 1201
Fax: (02) 6972 3356

Yanco

Yanco Agricultural Institute
2198 Irrigation Way
East Yanco NSW 2703
Ph: (02) 6951 2611
Fax: (02) 6953 7580
Private Mail Bag
Yanco NSW 2703

Young

93-93a Main Street
PO Box 46
Young NSW 2594
Ph: (02) 6381 4700
Fax: (02) 6382 3454

Riverina Local Land Services

www.riverina.lls.nsw.gov.au

1300 795 299