

## **BESTWOOL/BESTLAMB Newsflash – 9/4/09**

This Newsflash email is funded by Australian Wool Innovation and Department of Primary Industries.

**What's HOT** - check out this new event on the BESTWOOL/BESTLAMB website.

In this edition you will find

- [1. Marcus Oldham Rural Leadership Program - Applications Required](#)
- [2. If You Can Grow Lucerne, YOU Should!](#)
- [3. Farm Day - May 30 & 31](#)
- [4. "Farm Economics, Marketing and Social Change" Forum](#)
- [5. Australia's Premium Fibre - WOOL - Continues to be in Short Supply](#)
- [6. Closing Date for Drought Programs Extended](#)
- [7. South West Farm Monitor Project 2007 - 08](#)
- [8. Rabbits are Australia's Worst Invasive Pest](#)

**NB:** The next Newsflash edition will be using an updated email list of members and associates - if you still want to receive Newsflash, make sure you have replied to requests for updating your membership.

### [Marcus Oldham Rural Leadership Program - Applications Required](#)

BWBL is again sponsoring two candidates for the Marcus Oldham Rural Leadership Program this year, as a way of investing in the leadership capacity within the wool and lamb industry.

The program is to be conducted from Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June to Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July at the Marcus Oldham College, Geelong. Participants in the program develop their skills in teamwork, future vision, communication, public speaking, negotiation, interpersonal relationships, goal setting and community leadership.

The scholarship covers all program costs including accommodation and meals. Candidates are selected on the basis of their potential to contribute as a leader in the industry and are selected by a three-member panel of the BWBL Advisory Committee. Applications close on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2009. To find out more about the program visit the website [www.marcusoldham.vic.edu.au](http://www.marcusoldham.vic.edu.au) **If you are interested in applying phone on (03) 5355 0531**

### [If You Can Grow Lucerne, YOU Should!](#)

This was the message EverGraze research leader, Ralph Behrendt delivered to south west farmers at the recent EverGraze seminar, "Lucerne: past, present and future.

While lucerne does not like wet feet or high aluminium levels in the soil, there are large areas of the region which are suitable for growing the perennial legume.

Keynote speaker Bill Knipe, Manager of the International Division of Forage Genetics from USA, gave the audience a taste of what to expect from lucerne in the future. New traits include introducing genes that increase the fibre digestibility and decrease the lignin content to improve forage palatability and animal performance.

Another new improvement will be lucerne with leaf tannins. Introducing this gene will result in reduced bloat in cattle grazing Lucerne. Other attributes being investigated are ways to delay flowering and increase plant biomass.

"Delayed flowering will stretch the window of opportunity for grazing, before lucerne bolts and declines in nutritive value. This will enhance the flexibility of farm management resulting in better grazing, and hence higher animal production and fodder conservation," Mr Knipe said.

All presentations from the Hamilton lucerne seminar can be downloaded from the EverGraze website [www.evergraze.com.au/slideshows](http://www.evergraze.com.au/slideshows). For further information contact Anita Morant, [Anita.Morant@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:Anita.Morant@dpi.vic.gov.au)

### Farm Day - May 30 & 31

Farm Day is an event that is designed to breakdown the rural urban divide in a day of "fun, friendship & understanding". In basic terms it allows insight for the city family to witness first hand what goes into producing their food and fibre.

**If you would like to host a family call 1300 36 70 36**

### "Farm Economics, Marketing and Social Change" Forum

WHEN: Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April

WHERE: Moyston Recreation Reserve Pavillion, Moyston

TIME: 5pm to 8.30pm

Guest speakers will include

- Roger Wilkinson, Senior Social Researcher with DPI - How land use and population is changing in the area, what causes this change and what impacts does it have?
- Jonathon Tocker, Senior Farm Business Analyst with DPI - Global and local influences on farm operating costs - Wool and grain commodity outlooks, how are they developed and what's in store for 2009 - Introduction on how to assess new market opportunities.
- Case Study - REACH, "Rupanyup Educational Activities Community House" - A committee representative will give a 10 minute overview of why and how REACH was set up in Rupanyup.

**Registrations with DPI, Megan Harris, 5522 3467 by Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April - *AgFutures***

### Australia's Premium Fibre - WOOL - Continues to be in Short Supply

The Australian Wool Production Forecasting Committee says Australia's premium fibre continues to be in short supply because of poor rainfall across south-east Australia and lower than expected fleece weights. The Committee also expects that supply will not rebound in 2009/10.

The Committee's revised forecast for Australian shorn wool production this season is 355 mkg greasy, 15 mkg greasy lower than its forecast in December and 10.5% lower than in 2007/08.

The significant shift in the structure of the flock, with a greater proportion of ewes and lambs and a much smaller proportion of wethers, has meant that even in states where rainfall and seasonal conditions have been reasonable, fleece weights have remained below historical levels.

Another contributing factor identified was the reduced use of fertiliser on pastures due to its significant price increase, which has reduced carrying capacity.

The recent softer wool prices in comparison to continued good prices for sheepmeat and lamb are causing growers to consider their options, with a further move towards the use of terminal sires for prime lamb production. However, from a positive perspective, Australian farmers are largely remaining with sheep and Merino ewes as the base of their operation. The DAFWA survey found that 67% of Merino ewes will be mated to Merino rams this season which will help the Australian wool industry recover once seasonal conditions improve across Australia and once wool prices pick up.

**Full reports of the latest forecasts are available on the AWI website at [www.wool.com.au/forecasts](http://www.wool.com.au/forecasts).**

### Closing Date for Drought Programs Extended

Application deadlines for two DPI drought programs have been extended. The Drought Apprenticeship Retention Bonus will now close on 30 April while On-Farm Productivity Improvement Grants will remain open until 30 June 2009.

The Drought Apprenticeship Retention Bonus is a \$2 million drought initiative administered by DPI that provides \$1,500 grants to eligible farm businesses and those that support primary producers, such as mechanics, metal fabricators and farm supply businesses.

An On-Farm Productivity Improvement Grant is a \$6 million drought initiative administered by Rural Finance that provides grants of up to \$3,000 to eligible farm businesses to install fixed on-farm productivity improvements. These grants are available in the 25 most drought affected municipal areas in Victoria plus the Bacchus Marsh and Werribee irrigation districts.

"The application deadline for these programs has been extended due to the impact of fire response and recovery activities on businesses in many areas of the state," said Helen Quinn, DPI Drought Response Manager.

For more information about these initiatives should contact the Drought Information Line on 136 186 or visit the [DPI website](#). - *Lewis Hill, Marketing and Communication (Spring Street)*

### **South West Farm Monitor Project 2007 - 08**

The summary of results from the *South West Farm Monitor project 2007-08* is now available from the DPI website. This year, whole farm profitability increased significantly compared to last year as a result of improvements in all major enterprises; sheep wool, prime lamb, beef cattle and hay and grain.

The project analysed financial performance of mixed farming businesses across south west Victoria and compared average productivity and profitability trends with the top 20 per cent of farms. The key feature article, prepared by Tony Berrisford, details the changes in land use across south west Victoria during the past 15 years. Major changes in land use have resulted from widespread timber plantations as well as the drier climate which has increased the area to plant grain crops. The impact of these changes on farm businesses and the impact on the wider community are also discussed.

**A hardcopy version of the project is available for purchase contact Jonathon Tocker 5336 6633 or Claire Swann 5336 6641 from the Farm Monitor Project Team - Claire Swann Farm Monitor Team**

### **Rabbits are Australia's Worst Invasive Pest**

Your help is needed to find and map wild rabbits anywhere in Australia, during RabbitScan Month, May 2009. People tell us they are seeing more pest rabbits, right around Australia, even in urban parks, national parks and coastal zones, as well as farms. That's a big problem, as rabbits threaten biodiversity and agriculture, eat new seedlings that groups are trying to establish to help with climate change issues, and cause soil erosion, which leads to sediment in waterways. Rabbits are impacting on 156 threatened native species of plants and animals. Rabbits are one of the prime reasons for much of Australia's extinctions and biodiversity loss. Rabbits also cause at least \$200million a year of damage to crops and agriculture too. Just one rabbit per hectare (about the size of 5 house blocks) will prevent the recruitment of native perennial species. RabbitScan is a national community initiative, by the Rabbit Management Advisory Group, supported by Australia's leading rabbit scientists, industry and government, to help map and determine where rabbits are. It's simple: go for a walk or drive, any time but in particular May 2009, simply take note of where and when you see pest rabbits.

You can let us know what you find via the community RabbitScan website, using Google Maps from 1 May 2009, to locate where you saw them - or simply drop us a letter, fax, SMS or email. Your RabbitScan pics and blogs are very welcome too!

**Contact** RabbitScan Team: Email: [rabbitscan1@gmail.com](mailto:rabbitscan1@gmail.com) SMS: 0421 690 892 Fax 02 6201 2532

Mail: RabbitScan PO Box 4065 Warrimoo NSW 2774 Australia

And finally an interesting website on solar energy

Have a great Easter, Annette  
BESTWOOL/BESTLAMB Administrator