

Grazing Land Management Newsletter

SA Rangelands

Feb 2022

Grazing Tech – WOW

DeRose Hill Station

The Stanes family run Angus-Charolais cross cattle in their grazing operations across properties in northern SA and the southern NT. DeRose Hill is used as a fattening property for heavy steers. A BPS (Building Pastoral Sustainability) grant has supported the establishment of a Walk Over Weighing system on DeRose Hill to support faster decision making in assessing cattle and pasture condition. Bennett Stanes recently presented their experiences at the Coober Pedy Cricket & Conversations event via a YouTube presentation. The system has only been recently deployed, and while there are still a few tweaks to make, Bennett has summarised his experiences with the set-up:

- Difficult to set-up with uninitiated cattle (especially if starting with older animals)
- Takes about 20 minutes to set-up into a trap mechanism of a water point
- Links up with TruTest EID system
- Great for understanding the average weight of the herd and how far off to reach target market weights in real-time
- Helps with faster decision making and important in preventing over grazing
- Important to make time in your business to use and analyse data
- Strongly advise anyone adopting new tech to keep in touch at all times with the developer. Collaborate and problem-solve together to get the best results



GRAZING TECH STICKY BEAK

The Clarke family near Craddock have installed an automated solar powered unit in their containment feeding yard. A livestock nutrition workshop and field tour will begin at Craddock on Friday, **4 March 2022**. Please email Andrea for more details – places are limited

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Bladder saltbush (*Atriplex vesicaria*) a valuable fodder species high in protein, and grows extensively throughout the SA rangelands.

Blast from the Past

Sexy Saltbush...

Did you know that bladder saltbush is subdioecious? Plants can be male, female or a bit of both. Work at Middleback Station in the 1990's found that sheep preferentially graze female saltbush bladder plants compared to male plants. Research using cafeteria style grazing trials concluded that there is a grazing deterrent present in male plants and the male flower spike is a visual cue for sheep when making grazing decisions.

More info in the paper "*The role of the male flower spike as a cue for selective grazing in bladder saltbush*" Walsh et al (2005) The Rangeland Journal

Soils update

Dung Beetles

There are more than 6000 species of known Dung Beetles in the world, and they play an important role in ecosystems by cleaning up animal manure and building soil structure. Australia has its own suite of native dung beetles which have evolved with grazing marsupials, but are not adapted to use and disperse cattle dung effectively. As livestock production systems in Australia grew, so did the population of flies. From 1965 to 1985 more than 50 species of Dung Beetles were introduced into Australia by the CSIRO. Of these introductions, 23 species successfully established in grazing livestock systems and have been extremely successful in improving soil fertility and reducing bush fly populations to support productive grazing systems. To generalise their roles, Dung Beetles fall into one of three categories – rollers, tunnellers or dwellers.

A great little film clip to watch with the family on the background of Dung Beetles in Australia can be seen on Youtube. Search up “Dung Down Under 1972”

Keen to learn more about Dung Beetles in your patch?

www.dungbeetles.com.au

To record and report dung beetle activity across the pastoral zone [MyDungBeetle reporter App](#) is a great place to start. Feel free to share your Dung beetles with Andrea Tschirner on 0438 720 469.

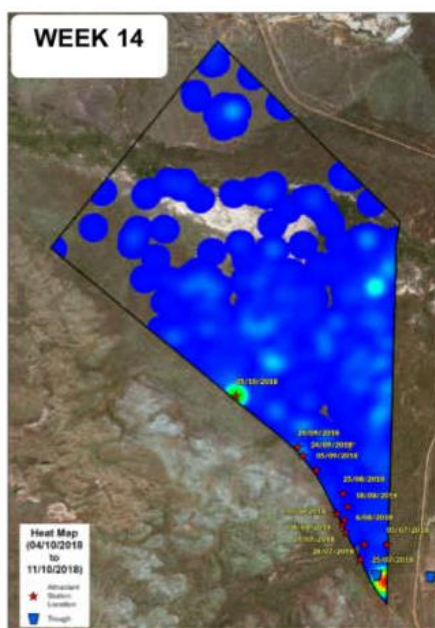
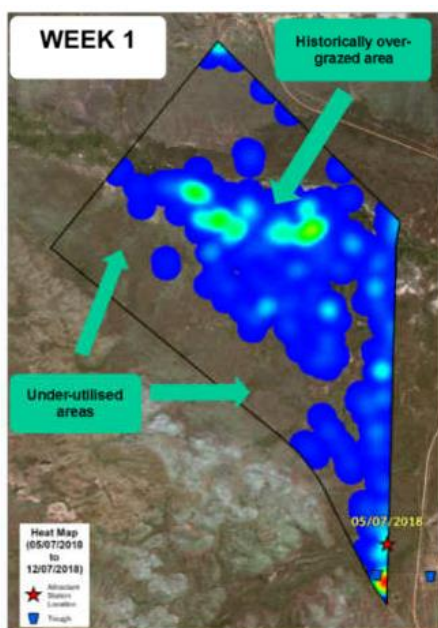


This little chappie (who you won't find on the website) is a species that has been recently found on cattle country near Cadney Park. It is *Aphodius lividus*. Very little is known about the extent and range of dung beetles working in the arid zone – it will be great to collect observations over the coming growing season.

Grazing News

Better landscape utilization without more fences

Self-herding principles offer an opportunity to modify and control animal behaviour. In a study at Kidman Springs Research station, grazing impacts were measured using GPS tracking collars to test the effectiveness of using and moving supplementary licks as attractants in different parts of a paddock.



The heat-maps generated by mapping heifer movements around the paddock showed impressive results. Keen to learn more?

<https://austrangesoc.com.au/better-landscape-utilisation-without-more-fences-can-it-be-done/>

Image sourced from <https://futurebeef.com.au/projects/self-herding-kidman-springs/>

Carbon Neutral industry

CN30

Presentations by MLA at the SA Pastoral Field Day late last year spoke of an ambitious target set by the Australian red meat and livestock industry to be carbon neutral by 2030.

“This target means that by 2030, Australian beef, lamb and goat production, including lot feeding and meat processing, will make no net release of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions into the atmosphere.”

Red meat and livestock industries currently make up 11.8% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. This figure has halved since 2005.

There are two main strategies that will require commitment from industry: emission avoidance and carbon storage

An update on what CN30 means for producers can be found at <https://www.mla.com.au/research-and-development/Environment-sustainability/carbon-neutral-2030-rd/cn30/#>

Increasing pressure from international markets is creating interest from export industries to ensure a carbon neutral status is reached. The delivery of regional workshops around South Australia to measure and account for carbon in our agricultural sectors will roll out in late March.

A workshop to be held in Port Augusta will offer an opportunity for up to 10 pastoral businesses in the SA Arid Lands region to participate in a carbon accounting process with support from PIRSA. We are seeking interest from up to 10 pastoral businesses to participate in this free pilot program. Participants will work with a consultant to develop a property carbon footprint assessment, and attend a free workshop in Port Augusta on Friday, March 25.

Pasture Profile

In contrast to 2021, the extent of summer rainfall across northern South Australia is likely to have a significant impact on ground cover and pasture growth in the coming months.

This plant growth model developed for 2021 illustrates wide spread conditions where plant growth is well below average, though conditions were highly variable in the far north of the state.

Native millet

Panicum decompositum

With broad blue-green leaves and a distinctive spreading seed head, millet is very palatable when young and easily grazed out in heavily stocked pastures. This species provides and extensive and reliable forage producer in flood plain areas after summer rains. Seeds are great budgie food.

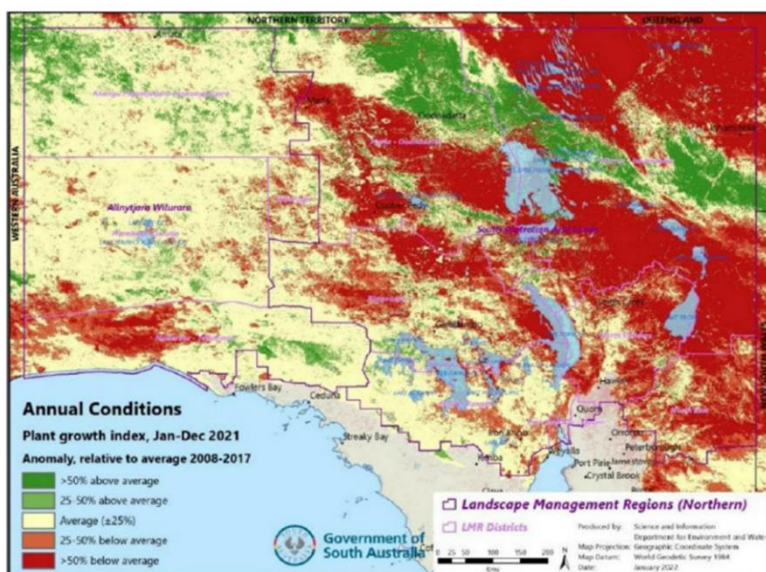


Figure 1: Plant growth index for rangelands zone, 12 month period January–December 2021

Summer growing grasses

Grasses can be divided into two main categories – summer growing (C4 grasses) and winter growing (C3 grasses.) These terms refer to the different chemical pathways that grasses use to capture carbon dioxide during photosynthesis. C4 grasses like Native Millet will flourish in current seasonal conditions across the southern rangelands.

Summer growing grasses feature more bulk than winter growing species; however tend to have lower feed quality.

Looking for information on grazing land management in the SA Arid Lands region?

Please contact Regional Agriculture Landcare Facilitator andrea.tschirner@sa.gov.au 0438 720 469