

Across the OUTBACK

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Makeover for *Across The Outback* marks its 20th anniversary

Welcome to the first edition of *Across The Outback* for 2010.

This edition marks 20 years since the publication first rolled off the press as *Outback*, published by the then Department of Lands on behalf of the Pastoral Board for the South Australian pastoral industry.

The then Minister of Lands Susan Lenehan introduced the first issue of *Outback* describing it as a tool 'for good communication between all the groups which have an interest in the arid zone' including pastoralists, conservation, recreation and tourist groups.

While the objectives of the publication remain much the same today and it remains committed to the region, over the years the publication has expanded to include contributions from various government agencies who are active in the Arid Lands.

Changes

In 2010 there are a few more changes afoot.

While we'd like to say that these were deliberately timed to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the publication it is actually just a timely coincidence.

Thanks to Merri Tohill for alerting us to this milestone.

...Continued on back cover



Meryn Codell

The recent cyclone in Queensland brought with it welcome flooding and rainfall to our region - see the back page for more spectacular photos of this exciting event.

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Use photopoints to record recovery from drought and dust storms

In light of the drought and recent dust storms Michael McBride, Presiding Member of the Pastoral Board, is encouraging all pastoral lessees to photograph vegetation photopoints and update their photopoint manuals.

As Dorothy McKellar said *we live in a land of drought and flooding rains* and as lessees over the years we have collected our own photographs of droughts, dust storms and flood events.

Fortunately the extreme climatic events that we are presently experiencing occur only over long time frames but it would be good to take this opportunity to record the impacts as well as the recovery process.

With the advent of the photopoint manual the Pastoral Board recommends that pastoral lessees record their present situation at the photopoints they can conveniently locate.

When the season changes again it will be informative both to lessees and to the Pastoral Board to monitor the recovery that will occur.

This is especially important now in those areas that have received beneficial rains and are already showing signs of improvement.

The Pastoral Board also recognises that many lessees have already adapted to the prevailing conditions and reduced stock numbers accordingly to allow a quicker recovery when that time comes.

Pastoral inspections

Lessees are assured that pastoral inspectors know the variability of seasons and are skilled in taking seasonal conditions into account when interpreting the land.

Lessees should not be unduly concerned by a visit from pastoral inspectors.

Similarly, assessment officers take climatic trends and exceptional events into account when performing and interpreting lease assessments. ■



Before (1991)



After (Dec 2009)

PASTORAL BOARD AND PROGRAM CONTACTS:

The Pastoral Board of SA
Soil & Water Environments Building, Entry 4,
Waite Campus, Waite Road, Urrbrae, SA
(GPO Box 2834, Adelaide SA 5001)

General enquiries:
Phone (08) 8303 9751
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Michael McBride 0427 087 966

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Glenn Gale (08) 8303 9345

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Public access to pastoral lands
David Oag (08) 8648 5174

Lease assessments
Craig Baulderstone (08) 8303 9752

Lease inspections and tenure
Chris Turner (08) 8303 9755

PASTORAL BOARD 2010 MEETING DATES

- Meeting 119 Thursday 11 February
Adelaide
- Meeting 120 Wednesday 7 and
Thursday 8 April
Port Augusta
(potential joint meeting
with SAAL NRM
Board and forum with
pastoralists)
- Meeting 121 Thursday 17 June
Adelaide
- Meeting 122 Thursday 19 August
Adelaide
- Meeting 123 Wednesday 20 and
Thursday 21 October
Location to be
determined
- Meeting 124 Thursday 15 December
Adelaide or Pt Augusta

Some dust clouds can have a silver lining

Chris Turner, Senior Pastoral Inspector

Many readers will be well aware of the horrific dust storms that roared through the pastoral areas of the State late last year, with the worst event occurring on 22 September. This dust storm came on top of several years of drought conditions, lasting about 15 hours and with winds of up to 100 kilometres per hour.

Many pastoral properties suffered extensive damage, including stock deaths, huge reductions in productivity, impassable roads and tracks, and damage to waterpoints, buildings and other infrastructure.

At the request of pastoralists, staff from the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation inspected five properties in what seems to be the worst affected area, being the area north of Olary in the north east pastoral district.

Major stock reductions

On all five properties pastoralists had carried out major stock reductions after the dust storms. There was no choice as the properties suffered almost complete defoliation of low shrub vegetation and removal of surface cover and litter, and quick action was needed before stock condition began to deteriorate.

On the properties inspected, stock removals as a consequence of the dust storms (sales, agistment etc) ranged from 50% to a staggering 97% of their total stock.

One disheartening aspect of the dust storms was that pastoral assessments/inspections in the north east area prior to the dust storms had indicated that even though many of the pastoral areas were still experiencing extended severe dry conditions, the predominant land condition was in a strong state with perennial shrubs actually showing some recruitment (new young ones being established) in certain areas.

Welcome rain

After the lashing of the dust storms significant rainfall has been recorded

in many of the pastoral areas of the State over the last few months. Good falls in November, around New Year and again in February have revitalised many areas of the State, with perennial grasses and shrubs regenerating vigorously. Dams have been filled and in many cases stock have been returned from agistment.

It's quite amazing that the resilience of the country is such that following many years of drought conditions it can bounce back when conditions are right.

Many would say that that is also an appropriate summary of the character of the people who choose to live and work in the rangelands. ■

IMAGES

- L Stock yards filled with sand from the dust storms
- R Jeff Stringer, Pastoral Inspector, assessing damage caused by the dust storms





Update on north east pastoral lease assessments

Augie Facelli & Carolyn Woods

Fieldwork as part of the second round of lease assessments began in the north east pastoral district in 2009 with work completed on eight leases, including several large properties.

As newly appointed lease assessment officers, we undertook the field work on two of these leases in November and December last year, under the supervision of Craig Baulderstone and John Maconochie.

We faced a steep learning curve of local botany and condition assessment that was made all the more challenging by extreme heat, choking dust storms and finally by rain showers. An interesting range of country was encountered and an enormous range of conditions, with photopoint sites re-monitored that have encountered good seasons and bad.

The area has been subjected to drought conditions for several years and severe dust storms late last year, all of which we managed to witness in a few short weeks in the field. Despite the recent drought the stations visited showed positive trends in terms of perennial shrub recruitment.

In an area severely affected by the dust storms, one monitoring site demonstrated good improvement in condition with the recruitment and survival of perennial shrubs and yet the loss of topsoil and piling around these plants was very pronounced. This site is likely to recover more rapidly than those with less shrub cover. The importance of good plant and lichen cover was highlighted with some sites maintaining top soil whilst denuded areas were heavily eroded by the extreme wind events.

Impacts of the drought conditions vary considerably, with some areas maintaining good shrub cover while others have suffered a large amount of bush death.

It is planned to delay the lease assessments for those leases in the district that were severely affected by the dust storms. Storm affected sites will still be monitored on other properties in the district that will give insight into recovery trends.

We look forward to visiting other north east stations and meeting pastoralists with the recommencement of the field work program in a few weeks time, and further developing our understanding of the region, its pastoral resources and challenges. ■

MINING AND EXPLORATION GUIDELINES

There are several regulatory guidelines covering the minerals exploration and mining process that will be very useful to pastoralists.

Two key guidelines relevant to pastoralists are:

Guidelines for landholders; your rights in relation to mineral exploration and mining in South Australia

Aimed primarily at pastoralists and other rural landholders (both leasehold and freehold) and provides information about your statutory rights and what to expect regarding proposed exploration and mining operations on (or near) your property.

Mining approval processes

Provides information about the statutory and policy context of the two-stage authorisation process for mining in South Australia.

Guidelines are available on the PIRSA Minerals website www.pir.sa.gov.au/minerals/forms_and_guidelines

The website also provides information on mines that have been approved, are in development and former mines. www.pir.sa.gov.au/minerals/sa_mines



DUST STORM ASSISTANCE

Pastoralists affected by the dust storms in late September are eligible for assistance under the State Government drought support program Planning for Recovery.

This program allows pastoralists to apply for a grant of up to \$4,000 to have a business plan developed and an implementation grant up to \$10,000 for a project identified in the business plan. Applications for this program close on 31 March 2010.

Further information: Evelyn Poole 0429 001 495

Community groups win \$\$ for landcare projects

Several community groups and organisations operating in the SA Arid Lands region were recently successful in obtaining a share of funds to undertake landcare and watercare projects as part of the State Natural Resources Management Program for 2009-10.

Andamooka Progress and Opal Miners Association Inc.

Abating land management and biodiversity threats from Andamooka
\$10,000

A 'two-pronged' approach to biodiversity threats forms the foundation of this project, through increased control activities and education. Feral cat control, weed management and education programs targeting appropriate garden plant species are the primary measures to be undertaken to complete this project.

Arid Recovery

Arid Recovery: restoring Australia's arid lands
\$50,000

Due to trap saturation and disturbance by Bettongs, Arid Recovery can no longer assess population size of reintroduced species. A new monitoring program will be developed to accurately assess population size. Genetic management of the Western Barred Bandicoot population will also be undertaken to improve overall population health at a national level. Arid Recovery will also be developing fact sheets and information packages for landholders, the community and

corporate groups. They will also be conducting training events on feral animal control and threatened species monitoring.

Blinman Progress Association

Parachilna Gorge Cliff-face Opuntia Control Project
\$49,900

This highly-specialised project will treat Wheel Cactus growing on cliff-faces, ledges and other difficult-to-reach locations through Parachilna Gorge. Specialist contractors will abseil to treat plants while volunteers act as spotters on the ground. The two will work together to remove plants from a 500ha area.

Great Tracks Cleanup Crew
Great Tracks Cleanup
\$10,000

The Great Tracks Cleanup Crew will be conducting trips to remove rubbish from roadsides along the Oodnadatta Track, the Birdsville and Strzelecki Tracks and 'out of district' roads in the Gawler Ranges. The work covered by these trips will contribute to ecosystem preservation in the region, while promoting a minimal impact ethos.

Nursery and Garden Industry SA

Grow Me Instead SA Reprint
\$30,000

The grant will enable the printing and distribution of a further 10,000 copies of the 'SA Grow Me Instead' booklet. The publication promotes the public's role in sustainable land management through suggesting alternative garden plants

to environmental weeds. It also offers advice on weed control and the prevention of weed establishment.

Oodnadatta Progress Association
Greening Oodnadatta
\$10,000

In order to determine appropriate species and methods for planting native vegetation around Oodnadatta, an investigation will be undertaken into the most appropriate species for providing shade, shelter and dust suppression while maintaining local character. Once this knowledge is obtained, a public training workshop and factsheet will be developed for residents, and 300 plants will be established in key areas of the town.

SSAA – Hunting and Conservation Branch

Trial subsidy of costs to maintain Bounceback success
\$10,000

This Sporting Shooters Association of Australia project will undertake a goat culling program within Gammon Ranges National Park.

Tjaliri Aboriginal Community

Mabel Creek Station land management plan
\$9,900

The project will allow for completion of a land management plan for Mabel Creek Station by the Tjaliri Aboriginal Corporation. The plan will set strategic direction for the corporation, with strategies including best practice management, protection of Indigenous cultural values and future grazing management on the property. A professional facilitator will be engaged to assist with the development of the plan.

For further information contact the SA Arid Lands NRM Board
8648 5977 ■



Western Barred Bandicoot

Photo: Petrina Duncan (Arid Recovery)

Got some cactus on your place?

Greg Patrick, Frank Lyman & Louise Gavin

The SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board has funding available to assist land managers with Opuntoid cacti, a family of declared weeds increasingly impacting the region's biodiversity and pastoral enterprises.

Opportunities exist for landholders and communities to work together with our Pest Management Officer and Volunteer Coordinator to plan a coordinated cactus management program.

This may include assistance to engage a contractor to do control work on your property or to survey cactus distribution and develop an action plan. Some injection kits are available for short term loan.

Interested applicants should contact our Pest Management Officer 8648 5977.

Here's what two properties have done to control the cacti on their place...

TOWARDS A NATIONAL APPROACH TO CACTUS MANAGEMENT

A recent forum highlighted that it's not just South Australia's rangelands that are struggling with cacti infestations – Australia's 39 invasive Opuntoid cacti species are the focus of control efforts nationwide.

With no effective broadscale biocontrol techniques available, and control costs exceeding land value in many places, there has been emerging national concern about the proliferation of these serious weeds.

Involving over 40 people and convened by the State Opuntia Taskforce, the inaugural National Forum for Invasive Cacti was held at the Waite Research Centre in December.

The objective of the forum was to establish a unified approach to invasive cacti management and exchange information on identification, control methods, and raising community awareness.

The State Opuntia Taskforce is an initiative of the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board, and the Rangelands NRM Alliance, representing NRM organisations from all the affected states and territories.

Narcoona

Property owners around Narcoona Station along with volunteers and some Board staff recently spent a successful day injecting cactus, discussing management methods, exchanging ideas and learning new ones.

The group surveyed a flood-out area of Narcoona Station and treated 23 Opuntia cacti all less than half a meter in height.

The plants were injected with neat glyphosate and marked with a brightly coloured spray paint to assist in identifying which plants had been treated.

Bullyainnie

As a result of the successful trial at Narcoona, 12 volunteers gathered at Bullyainnie station the following week and injected nearly 300 cactus plants over an area of roughly 15 square kilometers.

This was carried out in the week of hot weather in November – ideal for poisoning cactus but not for working on high rocky terrain! The volunteers split into pairs and walked over rough rocky ridges injecting cactus plants hidden away in the gullies and washouts.

Cactus stem injection is a very simple, safe and effective procedure. Cacti are penetrated by knocking a 6mm steel rod into the stem near the root. The nozzle from the spot gun then fits neatly into the hole and 4-10 mm of neat glyphosate is injected into the cavity. ■

IMAGES

R Technical advice on control options and plant identification

OPUNTIOID CACTI IN SA A PERSISTENT, PRICKLY PROBLEM

There are around 25 Opuntoid cacti species in South Australia introduced as far back as 150 years ago as amenity plants such as garden ornamentals or hedges, or as food plants. They vary from low growing specimens up to 60cm high to tall shrubs up to five metres.

Opuntoid cacti are well adapted to the arid areas of South Australia surviving on rainfall as low as 150mm. Their fleshy fruit is readily transported through the birds and animals that feed on them and all parts of the plants can grow into new plants if they are broken off and come into contact with the soil.

Invasive cacti can cause injury to stock, humans and native animals, harbour pests like rabbits and foxes, and act as hosts for fruit fly.

Dense infestations form impenetrable thickets seriously impacting pastoralists and impeding stock access and mustering, and out-competing valuable grazing species and native plants.

Invasive cacti seriously impact the tourism industry by degrading or threatening the natural aesthetic value of South Australia's landscapes and by preventing access to tourism sites.

It is these traits of the Opuntoid cacti that have seen them listed as declared weeds under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004*.



Shoulders to the wheel as 'cactus army' wins award

Lorraine Edmunds

In November 2009, the Blinman Parachilna Pest Plant Control (BPPPC) Project received the Community Group Award at the 2009 State Landcare Awards in Adelaide as well as a Special Commendation in the 2009 Premier's Natural Resources Management Award. Project coordinator Lorraine Edmunds writes here about the achievements of the group and its many volunteers in controlling Wheel Cactus in the north Flinders Ranges.

We can't do it on our own, advised the late John Henery of Alpana Station near Blinman. John was right. We can't. Finding and treating Wheel Cactus (*Opuntia robusta*) in some of South Australia's most topographically challenging landscapes is beyond the resources of most landholders and their families. There was only one way forward, through collaboration.

Since 2004, landholders and contractors have been systematically treating Wheel Cactus on nine pastoral properties in the Blinman/Parachilna district. In the high country and other difficult-to-reach places, plants are injected with neat glyphosate. Where plants are more accessible, a foliar spray is used. Both control methods are delivering a 100 per cent kill rate.

Volunteer efforts

Whilst landholders and contractors have done most of the knockdown work, increasingly, volunteers are joining the Flinders Ranges 'Cactus Army'. The Adelaide Bushwalking Club, Australian Retired Persons

Association, and, the newest recruit, the Toyota Landcruiser Club of South Australia, are working with the McIntosh family of Gum Creek Station. In 2008, Bill and Jane McIntosh initiated a volunteer engagement program to help secure a buffer between Gum Creek and neighbouring Flinders Ranges National Park. The McIntosh's provide a welcome barbeque, accommodation, and a fuel donation in exchange for five days fieldwork.

The volunteers locate, map and treat isolated Wheel Cactus plants in thick Native Pine (*Callitris*) woodland along the flanks of the ABC and Trezona Ranges, country where quad bikes can't go.

When recreation becomes conservation, everyone is a winner.

Probably introduced to the Flinders Ranges more than a century ago, over the past four decades Wheel Cactus has dramatically spread. Individual plants can go unnoticed for years in

the wide, broad-brush canvases of the Flinders Ranges. When plants mature, birds and other animals feed on the fruits, dispersing seed across the landscape. Birds may move further out to roost and poop. This 'creep' may occur for decades, increasing the range of the infected area, whilst populations build within.

National Landcare Awards

The group will represent South Australia in the 2010 National Landcare Awards in Canberra later this year.

The BPPPC Project is supported by the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board, with State and Australian Government funding through Caring for our Country. ■

IMAGES

- L State Landcare Awards, National Wine Centre, Adelaide, Nov 2009. From L to R - John Gavin, Lorraine Edmunds, Hume Macdonald, Louise Gavin, Frank Bernhardt
- R Toyota Landcruiser Club of SA volunteers are inducted into the Wheel Cactus control program, October 2009, Gum Creek Station



Landscape processes in the Gawler Ranges

Gresley Wakelin-King

The SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board recently completed a pilot study on landform-ecology relationships on a grazing property in the Gawler Ranges, aiming to produce information specifically targeted to land management.

The preliminary investigation of the Gawler Ranges property used remote information (airphotos, Digital Elevation Models, satellite images, and references) to study the landscape and define likely process areas. The field investigation that followed documented landforms, sediments, broad ecological indicators, and other data.

Landholder consultation was a crucial part of the project, both to benefit from their knowledge, and to gauge what information would be of practical use.

The dominant landscape processes that were identified included intense localised rainfall as a landscape-altering element and discontinuous creek function in many of the valleys.

The implications for land management included strong links between geology and landscape productivity (especially in gilgai areas) and between landscape productivity and unchannelled valleys, gully erosion along tracks, and the random distribution of rain-induced erosion patches.

Grazing management and vegetation preservation were also identified as important factors in landscape maintenance.

Landscape processes of Moonaree Station: a pilot study is available for from www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au ■

IMAGE

Rich chenopod plain in the unchannelled valley floors of the study area



New education kit released

Louise Gavin

The SAAL NRM Board's new Education Kit has been developed to help young people learn more about the existing projects in the Arid Lands Region involving our water resources, native vegetation, threatened species, weeds and feral pests.

Compiled by primary school teachers now working in the field of natural resources management, the information contained in the kit is locally relevant to help local teachers and schools plan learning experiences for Years R-2, 3-5 and 6-7.

Our Education Kit has many ideas for teachers on local educational experiences, student-friendly fact sheets on threatened birds and animals, and an extensive resource list. A substantial list of enquiry questions will get teachers motivated in teaching their environmental topic for the term.

NEED SOME HELP?

Louise Gavin

The SAAL NRM Board now has the capacity to help landholders and community groups (including Progress Associations) access volunteers to undertake NRM activities.

If you or your group have the need for a volunteer or group of volunteers to assist you with activities that will help to better manage the region's natural resources you may be eligible to request volunteer support and free insurance from the SAAL NRM Board.

Our volunteer opportunities to date include assisting landholders in the Flinders Ranges and the North East Pastoral area with cactus control, assisting with surveys for native fauna and with our dingo research.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you think you have an activity suited to volunteers that might link with the Board's priorities contact our Volunteer Coordinator 8648 5977

Learning activities are referenced to South Australia's curriculum frameworks.

To learn more about the Education Kit or obtain a copy contact the Board's Education Coordinator 8648 5977 ■



Introducing two new faces ...



Greg Patrick brings over 10 years of practical experience to his role as the Board's Pest Management Officer.

Previously Greg

was a Regional Authorised Officer for the Northern & Yorke NRM Board where he assisted land managers, councils and government agencies handle their pest plant and animal issues.

His primary involvement has been in Opuntia, prickly bushes (ie. Mesquite and Parkinsonia), fox, wild dog and rabbit management.

Prior to this he was an Authorised Officer with the Animal and Plant Control Board.

Before working in natural resources management, Greg was a charter pilot working from Alice Springs into the Aboriginal lands as far as Kalgoorlie.

Greg is keen to see effective on-ground pest management programs in the Arid Lands region.



Jacinda Fennell was appointed late last year as the Board's Water Project Officer.

Growing up on remote cattle stations in Queensland and

South Australia has given Jacinda an understanding of the unique opportunities and challenges for outback communities.

Previously Jacinda worked for the Northern Regional Development Board as an Economic Development Officer.

After completing a Diploma in Agriculture she spent over a year in the mining sector as a contractor at Roxby Downs.

Jacinda is currently studying the Graduate Certificate in Rangeland Management through the University of Queensland.

Jacinda works with the Board on projects to protect rockholes and better manage the permanent waterbodies in the region.

For further information on the Board's pest or water management projects contact the office 8648 5977 ■



Photo: Arid Recovery

WOMA PYTHON STORY HAS 'LEGS'

Reece Pedler

Nearly 30 people responded to a recent call from the SAAL NRM Board for Woma Python sightings.

Reported in the November edition of *Across the Outback*, the unusual request – with its chance to win a \$100 fuel voucher – also captured the attention of local, interstate and national media.

Most reports have come from the far north-east of the state, particularly the Birdsville and Strzelecki Tracks and around Moomba in particular. There have even been a few sightings from western Queensland.

Some interesting and unexpected sightings have come from non-sandy habitats such as parts of the northern Flinders Ranges and North East Pastoral areas which are not considered to be typical Woma country.

The Board would like to thank those who have mailed in survey forms, emailed or telephoned. Your information adds to sightings collected during a mail-out survey in 2007 and is vital for building a picture of Woma Python ecology and distribution.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE!

If you have seen a Woma Python please contact our Community Fauna Recovery Officer 8648 5977. Any sightings accompanied by a photo and GPS coordinates will be eligible to win one of five \$100 fuel vouchers to be drawn April 1 2010.

Camel impacts

Deb Agnew

When camels were introduced to open up the arid areas of central Australia no-one could have known that today Australia's feral camel herd would number an estimated one million animals.

And without intervention the situation is set to worsen.

Camels live for up to 50 years, breeding actively for 30 years. At the current rate of increase, 80,000 more camels are added to the national herd each year.

When feral camels occur in high numbers the damage they cause becomes intolerable.

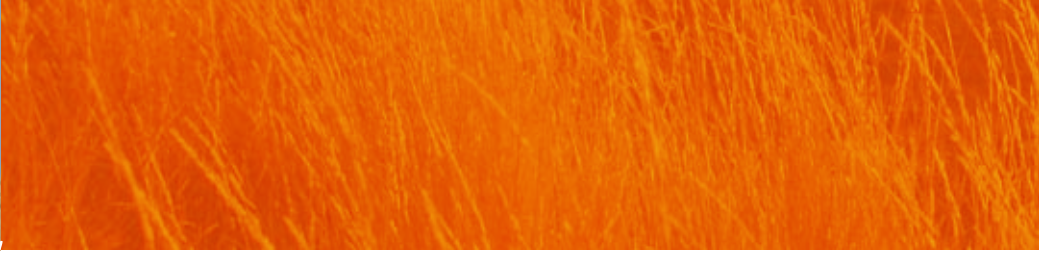
They can cause significant damage to Aboriginal heritage sites (such as culturally significant waterholes), infrastructure, fences and stock watering points.

Feral camels impact on sensitive plant species with ongoing implications for biodiversity in arid ecosystems.

They also compete with stock for feed. Many pastoralists are familiar with the destruction feral camels can cause to waterholes and along drainage lines.

Feral camel management is a shared responsibility between governments, Aboriginal communities, pastoralists and other landholders and it is necessary for all stakeholders to work together to achieve the best outcomes. The SAAL NRM Board is working with the South Australian and Australian Governments to increase the capacity of landholders to manage the impact of these animals.

Landholders interested in taking advantage of opportunities for assistance should contact the Board's office 8648 5977 ■



DINGO UPDATE

ISSUE 8 February 2010

The *Dingo Update* brings you the latest news from the Dingo Research Project, an initiative of the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board, as well as ongoing management news.

Ben Allen



Dingo movements and behaviour

As part of the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board's Dingo Research Project, we're putting GPS tracking collars on dingoes around the State. In Issue 4 of the *Dingo Update*, we showed the movements of one female dingo in the Strzelecki Desert east of Lake Frome. Now that we have got all the collars back from the dingoes in this area, we can have a better look at their behaviour.

Individual dingoes can be very different, and we found no clear patterns between age, sex, or body weight. When we look at how much walking they did in a month, some of them travelled about 300km whereas others travelled over 700km (Figure 1). A closer look at the results shows that male dingoes do the most daily walking in late May and again in early August (Figure 2). Late May is the mating season, and six weeks later the pups are born.

It is important to remember that these dingoes went round and round in circles within their territory, and these results are not how far they travelled away. The farthest dingo went only about 50km from where he was captured. Collared dingoes in sheep country in other states have travelled over 1,000km from where they have been captured.

The next step is to look at how often they visit artificial water points. Not all the data has been analysed yet, but so far, the longest time a dingo has gone without visiting a water point was 17 days in winter and seven days in summer – and that's with no rain and no other water! Stay tuned for more details in future issues of the *Dingo Update*. ■

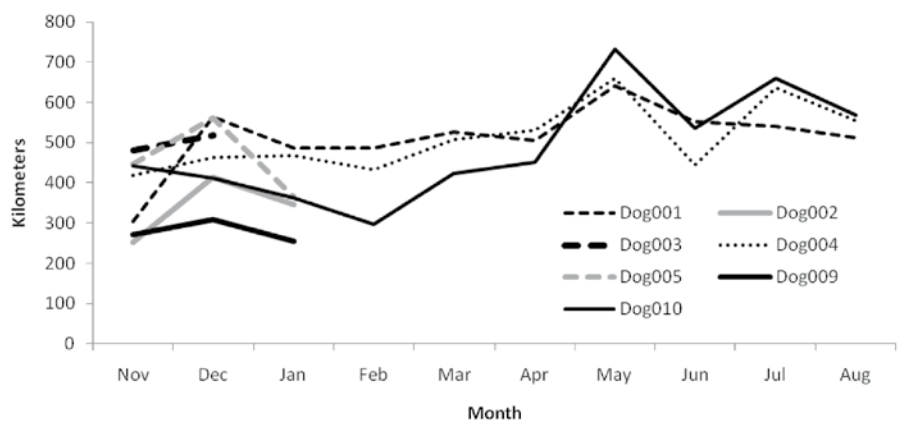


FIGURE 1 Monthly distance travelled

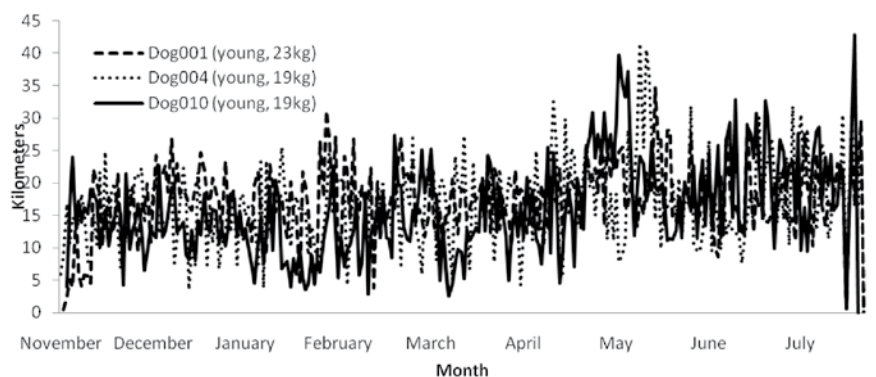


FIGURE 2 Daily distance travelled (males)

Response to Biteback criticism

Recently, the Coober Pedy Regional Times (21 January 2010, p. 9) printed an article about the Biteback project, a program for dingo control operating in the Arid Lands region south of the Dog Fence.

The Board was surprised to see the Biteback project described as a “Disturbing 1080 campaign to eradicate *Canis Lupus dingo* – The Australian wolf”. The article continued by providing some inaccurate and incomplete information which needs clarification.

- 1. Biteback was not instigated by the SAAL NRM Board.**
It is an initiative of a group of landholders in the North Flinders area, who were instrumental in sourcing sheep industry funds for their benefit. As well as contributing funding, the Board’s role is to assist landholders to implement the project.
- 2.. Biteback has nothing to do with mulesing.**
It was created to address the increasing dingo attacks on sheep in the area. Some landholders lost over 2,000 sheep in one year, or received only 70 lambs after mating 1,500 ewes. Others were forced to abandon sheep altogether and seek other income sources.
- 3. Biteback is not just about 1080 baiting.**
Dingoes (pure or hybrid) are a declared pest species in sheep areas south of the Dog Fence in South Australia, and any option – such as shooting, trapping, fencing, or baiting – which legally and ethically meets landholders’ obligations to control this pest is encouraged. Biteback is about encouraging all landholders to coordinate their collective dingo control activities in order to increase the viability of sheep production as a grazing option for the whole region.
- 4. Biteback also benefits wildlife.**
The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicine Authority (the Australian Government agency responsible for assessing 1080 use) support the continuing use of 1080 for the control of dingoes and other pest animals. Their recent review of 1080 considered the concerns of RSPCA Australia but concluded that ‘experts in wildlife management were unanimous in their support for the benefits of 1080 for biodiversity. For example, the Australian Mammal Society emphasised the critical importance of broad scale 1080 baiting programs to the conservation of Australia’s mammal fauna.’
- 5. Biteback is part of a much wider dingo program.**
North of the Dog Fence, the Board is investigating whether or not livestock losses increase as a result of leaving dingoes alone. That project addresses the positive role that dingoes might have in controlling other pest animals like foxes and feral cats.

The Board is committed to maintaining a healthy, naturally functioning ecosystem with sustainable industries and vibrant communities, and dingo management is a key part of this commitment.

For further information about this charismatic and challenging species visit www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au or contact the Board’s Dingo Project Manager 8648 5977 ■





‘Rain on the Rangelands’ Conference

Bourke, NSW, 26-30 September 2010

The Australian Rangeland Society will be presenting its Sixteenth Biennial Conference in Bourke, New South Wales in September 2010 – and you’re invited!

These conferences are the key forum for discussing the management of rangelands at a national level.

This year’s conference theme is *Water*, either as rain, river flow or its presence underground. Keynote speakers will target the management of water in

rangeland landscapes at various levels, from the whole basin or catchment down to the individual property.

The Conference will be a great opportunity for you to share your experiences with water (or lack of it!) and mingle with respected researchers that have been studying water and its interactions and influences on rangelands for years.

Location

Bourke provides a fitting location for such a theme given its strong links to the Darling River and current issues of river flow and water use in the Murray-Darling Basin. Bourke also represents the iconic ‘outback’ created through the poetry of Henry Lawson and retains strong Aboriginal links to the land.

The region demonstrates key rangeland issues, including the importance of controlling total grazing pressure and managing woody vegetation. Alternative land-uses and conservation management are well-represented in the area.

Program

To make the 2010 Bourke Conference more useful to landholders, the program is being arranged so that the first two days provide a stand-alone package focusing on practical rangeland management.

Day One will consist of field tours to inspect local properties and natural resource issues. We anticipate that delegates will see good examples of river rehabilitation, precision pastoralism, innovative grazing systems, total grazing pressure management and Enterprise Based Conservation areas.

Day Two will be a ‘practical applications’ session with speakers

discussing on-ground aspects of sustainably managing rangelands, including case studies.

We are keen to attract papers on precision pastoralism, the management of seasonal risk, innovative grazing systems and successful pest programs for the session.

Case studies on the implementation of successful projects will be encouraged, especially those balancing productive land use with biodiversity management and good economic outcomes.

Days Three and Four will include a broad range of natural resource management presentations but with a stronger scientific emphasis. These may also be of interest to pastoralists, exploring the interactions between rangeland water resources, various forms of land-use and biodiversity.

Options for pastoralists

Pastoralists wishing to participate in the conference will have the option of registering for Days One and Two only to pick up the practical sessions. We hope that you will also elect to attend the full conference.

The call for papers is now open with expressions of interest due 12 March 2010. Registrations will open in May..

For further information contact Russell Grant (Western Catchment Management Authority) 02 6836 1575 or Russell.Grant@cma.nsw.gov.au www.austrangesoc.com.au/site/whatson_conference.php



Outback Calendar

WILLIAM CREEK GYMKHANA

27 March

COOBER PEDY OPAL FESTIVAL

2-3 April (Easter long weekend)

BLINMAN LAND ROVER JAMBOREE

3-5 April (Easter long weekend)

SA ARID LANDS NRM BOARD MEETING

7-8 April

MARLA BRONCO BRANDING & FAMILY FUN DAY

24 April

YUNTA PICNIC RACES & GYMKHANA

1 May

These are a selection of events extracted from the *Calendar of Events* administered by the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board available at www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au

If you would like to receive notification when the *Calendar of Events* is updated please send an email to jenny.barker@sa.gov.au ■

ARE YOU ON THE ACROSS THE OUTBACK MAILING LIST?

Across The Outback is a free publication that is issued to over 1000 individuals or organisations with a stake or interest in the Arid Lands region.

If you would like to join the mailing list or update your details please contact the editor jenny.barker@sa.gov.au.

Please include your name, mailing address and email address (to receive electronic notification).

LOOKING FOR AN EARLIER EDITION OF ATO?

Electronic versions of the 2009 *Across The Outback* are available from the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board website www.saalnrm.sa.gov.au

To access electronic editions published between July 2003 and November 2008 visit the Outback Areas Community Development Trust website (OACDT) www.oacdt.sa.gov.au

Access to editions prior to 2003 may be more difficult but try contacting the Pastoral Board or OACDT.

THIS SPACE COULD BE YOURS!

Across The Outback is the only publication that focuses directly on the activities of the Arid Lands region. For 20 years its goal has been to support the pastoral industry and the community groups and organisations that support them.

In recognition that there is a lot happening in our region that our readers might like to hear about, the new-look *Across The Outback* has been expanded from 12 to 16 pages. In particular we'd like to hear from non-government organisations, Progress Associations or Friends groups operating in the area. Tell us what you're doing to support your community and if we have space we'll try to accommodate you.

Across The Outback only stays afloat because of the commitment of government agencies to contributing regular content as well as funding to help recover publication and printing costs. Regular contributing agencies are currently the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation (on behalf of the Pastoral Board), SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board and Primary Industries and Resources SA.

Across The Outback remains committed to reporting on government activities in the region in the single publication and we welcome contributions from other agencies.

For further information contact the editor jenny.barker@sa.gov.au or 8463 3354. A fee per article may apply.





Managing feral pigs at Innamincka

The Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) has been actively managing feral pigs at Innamincka Regional Reserve and Coongie Lakes National Park since 2001.

Feral pigs have been present in the Cooper Creek Catchment since the early 1900s. Domestic pigs were kept at homesteads and escapees are thought to have led to a wild population at Embarka Swamp (50km south of Coongie Lakes).

Feral pigs are a serious pest in Australia, and are found in New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory, with lower densities in SA and WA.

There are estimated to be between 4 and 23 million feral pigs in Australia at any one time – depending on seasonal conditions.

Feral pigs are the second most economically destructive pest to the agricultural industry following rabbits. Their impacts on biodiversity include predation of small ground nesting birds and their eggs, reptiles, and frogs. Pigs were recognised as a serious environmental pest at Innamincka

in the mid-90s, after successive flush seasons enabled a significant number of pigs to move downstream from Queensland via the Cooper Creek into Innamincka. Biological surveys in the late 1980s did not detect pigs along the North-West branch, Tirrawarra Swamp or the Coongie Lakes – but their presence was confirmed at Embarka Swamp. Innamincka and the Coongie Lakes are internationally significant wetlands, and are recognised as important water-bird breeding grounds by the RAMSAR convention.

Pig management program

DEH responded to the pig issue in 2001, implementing the 'Innamincka Feral Pig Management Program'. Since 2001, 566 pigs have been successfully removed from Innamincka. In November 2009 a further 50 pigs were removed from Innamincka with the valuable assistance of the Innamincka Pastoral Station (S. Kidman & Co Ltd.). DEH undertakes regular survey and control activities at Innamincka to maintain a very low pig population. ■

HELP US HELP YOU

Expressions of interest are sought from outback community members to join the Department for Environment and Heritage Outback Consultative Committee.

As a member of the committee you would make a valuable contribution to the management of the Parks of Outback South Australia, such as Innamincka Regional Reserve, Coongie Lakes National Park, Simpson Desert Regional Reserve and Flinders Ranges National Park.

Reporting to the Minister for Environment and Conservation, the Outback Consultative Committee provides advice on matters relating to park management and biodiversity conservation in the Outback Region, South Australia.

The Committee has 10-12 members and meets up to three times a year at various locations around the region.

The committee has vacancies and is seeking expressions of interest from people to serve voluntarily as Committee members who have an interest in:

- Biodiversity conservation
- Local government
- Fire management
- Land and natural resources management
- Tourism and recreation
- Built and cultural heritage
- Planning, business and works expertise
- Education
- Volunteering and community engagement.

Further information, including a copy of the terms of reference for the Committee, can be obtained from Geoff Axford, Regional Conservator, Outback 8648 5309, geoff.axford@sa.gov.au or First Floor, 9 Mackay Street, Port Augusta SA 5700

Expressions of interest close on Friday 26 March 2010





SEEN ANY THREE-DAY SICKNESS?

If you have seen any signs of Three-Day Sickness in your cattle, PIRSA Biosecurity Animal Health are keen to hear about it.

We are interested in mapping patterns of spread of the disease. This is particularly important in years where water is flowing out of Queensland and is likely to bring with it the insects that carry the virus.

Three-Day Sickness, also known as Bovine Ephemeral Fever, is a viral disease of cattle. The cattle experience a rapid onset of fever, with this high temperature returning to normal within a couple of days.

Affected animals stop eating and become depressed, often becoming stiff and reluctant to move.

Lameness may not become apparent until the second day of illness. The joints of the animals may appear swollen and the animal become lame on the second day. Some animals lie down and refuse to move.

If the symptoms of this disease are recognised, the best option is to let them rest and not subject them to any stress such as mustering or husbandry procedures. If animals are left alone they generally recover, as the name suggests, within three days.

If you have seen the disease recently (or even in the past) contact Trent Scholz (PIRSA Biosecurity Animal Health) 8648 5160 or trent.scholz@sa.gov.au

Animal health workshops – make more from your cattle

Trent Scholz

PIRSA Biosecurity Animal Health, in conjunction with the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board and Pfizer Animal Health held workshops for cattle producers in the State's north towards the end of last year.

The workshops were held at Marree and Oodnadatta on consecutive evenings in August. Trent Scholz (PIRSA Biosecurity Animal Health in Port Augusta) facilitated the proceedings.

Dr Khyle Stewart (Pfizer Animal Health) started the workshop by discussing some cattle diseases that commonly cause reproductive loss and what these diseases may be costing producers. He also covered some easy steps to prevent or reduce these losses.

Dr Kate Litchfield (PIRSA Biosecurity Animal Health) discussed the prevalence of these diseases in the pastoral region of South Australia, and how PIRSA can investigate cattle disease.

Producers were impressed with the need to observe and report any unusual signs in their animals including multiple abortions and unexpected infertility problems.

People were keen to learn how they could contribute to the program, realising the immediate individual and industry benefits of an effective disease program.

Ben Allen (Dingo Project Manager with the SAAL NRM Board) gave an interesting presentation on the impact of dingoes on cattle disease including the dingo's role in the neospora and hydatid lifecycles.

Key messages from the workshops were:

- Test all purchased bulls for BVDV and Campylobacteriosis (Vibriosis) status before putting with the herd
- Vaccinate bulls against BVDV and Vibriosis and BVDV – may increase calving percentage significantly
- Sample collection kits for disease testing and effective vaccines, suitable for organic enterprises, are available

PIRSA may be able to help investigate low calving percentages and any abortion outbreaks.

For further information, ring your veterinarian or PIRSA Biosecurity Animal Health 8648 5160 ■





Government
of South Australia

Across the Outback is prepared and edited by Jenny Barker (SAAL NRM Board). It is published every second month for the Outback SA Government and Community Alliances.

It is currently jointly funded by the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation (on behalf of the Pastoral Board); Primary Industries and Resources SA at Port Augusta and the SA Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board.

Comments and suggestions are always welcome.

Please contact jenny.barker@sa.gov.au or 8463 3354



Jenny Barker

SEND US YOUR PHOTOS!

To mark the transition of *Across The Outback* to full colour we would like to throw this page open to your favourite photos. Anything goes just as long as it exemplifies our unique region, its landscape, wildlife and, of course, its characters. Perhaps you captured a few snaps at the local gymkhana? Maybe you've caught an unusual creature on camera? Or maybe you were just in the right place at the right time...

Whether you're a budding photographer or just got lucky with a particular shot, please send your photos to jenny.barker@sa.gov.au. Clearly indicate what (or who) is shown in the photo and the photographer's name.

LAND OF DROUGHT AND FLOODING RAINS

Only a few short months after we experienced terrible duststorms, we now find ourselves in flood. You can see some of the results of duststorms in the Pastoral Board's contribution. On this page, enjoy the contrast and welcome relief of flooding rain. Thanks to Geoff & Julie Matthews, Meryn Codell and Santos for supplying photos.

IMAGES

Clockwise from top:
Cooper Creek and lakes floodplain;
Innamincka Station; Nappa Merrie
Bridge. Photos: Geoff Matthews



...Continued from front cover

Now in colour

Readers will notice that the publication has not only undergone a redesign but it is now being published in full colour. These decisions were taken to better distinguish between contributions from various agencies and to celebrate in full the extraordinary beauty of our region and its colourful characters.

*We hope that this
will enhance the reader's
experience.*

More info

You may also notice that *Across The Outback* is looking a little fatter.

We now have the flexibility to publish 12 or 16 pages per edition.

After the regular contributions from the Pastoral Board, SA Arid Lands NRM Board and Primary Industries and Resources SA there's not much space left in a 12 page newsletter for other news.

The extra four pages allows for *ad hoc* contributions from other government agencies, community groups, progress associations and 'friends' groups with an interest in the Arid Lands region.

Finally we acknowledge former editor Leith Yelland.

Having taken on the editorial role for *Across The Outback* less than 12 months ago, I didn't know Leith personally but it is clear that his contribution to *Across The Outback*, the community and its people was unparalleled.

We cannot possibly fill his shoes but hope he would approve of these changes. ■

Happy reading!