

**A**s President Mick said in the last Newsletter “I don’t intend to comment much on the season as plenty has been said elsewhere-----” The only comment that I wish to add is that the urban community has at last become aware of the severity of the drought and its impact on all the rural community.

We have just been told that the Federal Government will be spending 10.5 billion dollars on a nationwide plan aimed at solving the water crisis. There has been no comment yet on the probable impact of this expenditure on the Society’s producer members. The governance of the nation’s water, probably including the Snowy and the Murray-Darling is to be addressed, with a view to streamlining administration. We would welcome member’s views and suggestions for solving the water crisis in rural areas.

The Society had hoped that the next annual conference would be held in Yass. The conference committee under the leadership of Col Langford had investigated every possibility of holding the meeting in Yass but unfortunately no appropriate venue could be found. The next annual conference will be in Queanbeyan on July 17 to July 19, 2007. The general theme will be “Coping with Adversity”.

**CONTENTS**

Editorial (Haydn Lloyd-Davies) .....	1
Grassland Society of NSW Annual Travel Grant Application Form .....	3
Dual purpose wheats – dual purpose canolas? (H. Dove et al) .....	11
Grain & Graze comes to the Border Rivers of NSW & Qld (C. Harris) .....	13
NSWDPI receives a Grant to Study Locking up Carbon .....	15
Queanbeyan Conference – Call for Papers .....	17
Survey reveals widespread damage to roots of sub clover in autumn-winter .....	19
The future of Australian agriculture – Drought and climate change (J. Litchfield) .....	21
From the President’s Desk (Mick Duncan) .....	23

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Editorial cont.

The Travel Award Guidelines have been updated and revamped by Hugh Dove. The Travel Grant year is now a calendar year.

In the latest issue of the Australian Superfine Wool Growers Association Newsletter there were two articles by one of our committee – Dr John Ive. The first article was a clear record of how hard hit were the superfine wool growers in the Goulburn–Yass district by the combination of severe drought and depressed wool prices. Fortunately there has been a rise in wool prices lately. The other article by John was on the important issue of managing staple strength. He emphasises that to achieve high staple strength, fibre diameter along the staple needs to be as uniform as possible – a tough call on those coping with an acutely Mediterranean type environment! Copies of these articles can be obtained from Dr John Ive, Talaheni, Yass NSW 2583.

In Grass and Forage Science Vol 61 No. 4 there was a very complimentary review by M. Fothergill of “Forage legumes for temperate grasslands” by Dr John Frame. The publishers are FAO Inc. Enfield NH 03748. The price is US\$59. There are several chapters dealing with the general agronomy of legumes and a very large chapter of 250 pages in which 35 forage legume species are profiled in an easily accessible manner with high quality photographs and specific information.

I have recently read a publication by Michael Robertson from the Co-operative Research Centre for plant-based management of dryland salinity on “Lucerne Prospects”. There are chapters covering every state. Copies are available from the CRC for plant-based management of Dryland Salinity, University of Western Australia, 35 Stirling Highway, Crawley, WA 6009.

The committee wish all members a good 2007 and that it will be a many times superior year to 2006.

*Haydn Lloyd Davies*  
*Editor*





**ANNUAL TRAVEL GRANT  
APPLICATION FORM**

The Society may, on an annual basis, allocate a sum of money to provide grants to encourage and assist members to attend conferences, other than those conducted by the Society, or for any other purpose that the Society may determine. The by-laws relating to the Society's Travel Grants are attached to this Application Form and should be read carefully before completing the form.

Applicants should complete all details on this form and forward to:

The Secretary  
The Grassland Society of NSW Inc.  
PO Box 471  
Orange, NSW 2800

Further enquiries concerning Travel Grants can be directed to the Secretary at the following email address: [secretary@grasslandnsw.com.au](mailto:secretary@grasslandnsw.com.au)

Applications may only be submitted on this form or a photocopy thereof.

**Applicant's Name (Block Letters):**

**OFFICE USE ONLY:**

Application received:    / /    Approved:         / /

Membership checked:    / /    Grant amount:             / /

Interview:                Yes                No

Interview arranged:     / /    Applicant advised:       / /

  .....am/pm

Committee advised:     / /    Funds sent:             / /

Signed:.....                     / /

(Chairman, Grants SubCommittee)

**A. PURPOSE FOR WHICH GRANT IS REQUESTED**

Duration of proposed activity:	From	To
Amount \$		

Please summarise the reason for your application, including main features of itinerary and/or major events to be attended. Outline what you believe will be the benefit to you and, in turn, to the Society and its members. (No more than 2 A4 pages)

## B. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

Total Grant applied for: \$

Major components of this total (e.g., conference fees, travel expenses, accommodation):

Does the proposal relate to a group or individual activity?

If group, indicate Group/Organisation involved:

Have you received or are you applying for other financial assistance in relation to this proposal? (Please circle)

Yes

No

If YES, please provide details, including an indication of deadlines if other applications are being submitted

Other comments in support of your application (e.g., length of membership, participation in Society activities)

**C. PERSONAL DETAILS**

Surname:	Given names:	
Postal address:		
Occupation:		
Phone (b/h):	Phone (a/h):	Fax:
Email address:		

Major interest in Grassland Agriculture?

**Declaration:** I, .....hereby apply for a GSNSW Travel Grant for the calendar year.....for the purpose detailed above. I confirm that the information provided is correct and that I have read, understood and agree to abide by the Society's By-laws in relation to Travel Grants.

## **SOCIETY BY-LAWS GOVERNING FINANCIAL TRAVEL GRANTS TO MEMBERS**

- 1.** The Society may, on an annual basis, allocate a sum of money to provide grants to encourage and assist members to attend conferences, other than those conducted by the Society, or for any other purpose that the Society may determine
- 2.** Grants will be subject to these by-laws or any amendments thereto. The Society's travel grant "year" shall be the calendar year.
- 3.** The amount allocated annually and for what purpose will be determined by the State Management Committee and announced at the Annual General Meeting of the Society. Details and Application Forms will be published in the first Newsletter thereafter and on the Society's website.
- 4.** Money not expended in any one year will NOT automatically be carried over to the following year
- 5.** Grants will only be made to financial members with at least two years of continuous membership prior to the date of application
- 6.** A maximum of two grants will be made to any one individual, family or farm unit. Members may not apply for travel grants in consecutive years.
- 7.** Current members of the State Management Committee shall not be eligible to apply for and receive a grant during their term of office
- 8.** Retrospective grants will not be considered and grants are not transferable.
- 9.** Application will only be considered if made on the Society's Grants Application Form and if lodged by the November meeting of the State Management Committee, in the year preceding that for which the travel grant is sought.
- 10.** Decisions regarding successful applications will be made at the State Management Committee meeting in the November of the year preceding the uptake of the grant.
- 11.** Applications for grants will be acknowledged upon receipt and a decision notified to applicants not later than 31 January, following the State Management Committee's deliberations at the November meeting.
- 12.** Applications will be considered on their relative merits. Approval or otherwise will be made by the State Management Committee on the recommendation of its Grants Sub-Committee. The Committee's decision will be final.
- 13.** Travel grants will be forfeited if not taken in the year for which they are granted, unless the grant holder can demonstrate to the State Management Committee that the delay in using the grant was beyond the grant holder's control. Grants may only be used for the purpose for which they were granted.

14. Grants will be paid by way of reimbursement after attendance at an event on receipt of actual expenditure. However, at the discretion of the management Committee, grants may be paid in advance if so required to pay conference or airfare expenses. Such payment in advance may be made direct to travel grant recipients, or direct to conference organizers or an airline, as circumstances dictate.

15. Within two months of the completion of the purpose of the grant recipients will be required to submit a written report to the Society and if requested will be expected to make themselves available for a period of one year, to assist in the promotion of the Society, its aims and objectives. Such assistance will be of a practical nature (e.g. oral presentations) and by mutual agreement.



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**The Grassland Society of NSW is very grateful to the ANZ Bank  
for being one of our 2006 sponsors**





The Grassland Society of NSW is very grateful to CRT and Dow AgroSciences for their sponsorship in 2006



**NSW GRASSLAND SOCIETY SPONSORS  
List for 2006**

The NSW Grassland Society is very grateful to its sponsors for their generosity. Without the support of our sponsors we would have very restricted activity. Premier sponsors have donated \$3,000 (sometimes also in 'kind'). Major sponsors have donated \$1,500 and Corporate sponsors have donated \$750.

<b>Sponsors</b>	<b>Classification</b>
Combined Rural Traders (CRT)	Premier
Australian Farm Journal	Premier
Meat and Livestock Association	Premier
NSW Department Primary Industries	Premier
Dow Agrosiences	Major
Wrightson Seeds	Major
Heritage Seeds	Major
ANZ Rural	Major
PlantTech	Major
Australian Wool Innovations	Major
Hi-Fert	Major
Auswest Seeds	Corporate
Progressive Seeds	Corporate
PGG Seeds	Corporate
Summit Agro	Corporate
Graham Centre	Corporate
The Land	Corporate

## **Dual-purpose wheats - dual-purpose canolas?**

*Hugh Dove, John Kirkegaard, Walter Kelman (CSIRO Plant Industry, Canberra)*

Dual-purpose winter wheats for grain and grazing can be a highly profitable part of farming systems in SE Australia. However, such wheat is exposed to a higher risk of root disease (e.g. take-all) because it is sown early and often into areas in which the previous 'crop' (pasture grass) is an alternate disease host. A long-season canola sown after the pasture could provide a 'break crop' effect for dual-purpose wheat like that provided by spring canola in mixed farming systems, provided blackleg-resistant winter canola lines were available. As well, if such canolas could be used for both grazing and seed production, they could provide further management flexibility and income.

At Ginninderra Experiment Station near Canberra, we investigated the dual-purpose potential of canola in 3 pilot trials. The questions we addressed were: 1) would sheep consume canola forage and what would be their relative preference for this versus fodder brassica? 2) what is the nutritive value of canola forage? 3) would the canola varieties used recover from grazing? 4) would grazing result in reduced seed yield and oil content?

In 2004, the spring canola Hyola 60, plus 2 blackleg-resistant winter canola varieties, were sown in small plots in April and were surrounded by a hybrid fodder brassica (cv Hunter) for comparison. In mid-August, sheep were given access to both the canola varieties and the fodder brassica to determine if they preferred the latter to canola forage. They were then confined to the canola area only for a period of 48 hours. We estimated the biomass removed by grazing, the digestibility and protein content of the canola forage (August) and seed yield and oil content (December harvest). In 2005, grazing was delayed until mid-September to obtain a greater crop biomass and to see if later grazing had a greater effect on seed yield.

In 2004, sheep showed no preference for Hunter fodder brassica over canola, when given access to both; they grazed normally when confined to the canola. The mean biomass removed by grazing was equivalent to 2.5 t DM/ha and the estimated value of the grazing was \$210/ha. The average DM digestibility and crude protein contents of the canola varieties were 80.0 and 20.4 (%DM) respectively. Grazed canola flowered several days later than ungrazed, as grazed plants regrew and branched from lower buds after the removal of the main stem. Despite this delay, there was no significant effect of grazing on the yield

(ungrazed 4.35 t/ha; grazed 4.27 t/ha) or oil content (ungrazed 48.9%; grazed 48.1%) of the canola varieties.

Delaying grazing by 1 month in 2005 resulted in the accumulation of more biomass and the equivalent of 4 t DM/ha was removed by grazing. Crops were more advanced at the time of grazing which, by contrast with 2004, resulted in a mean reduction in seed yield of 13%. However, the economic value of this reduction (about \$140/ha at 2005 prices) was less than half the estimated value of the grazed forage (\$330/ha).

In 2006, with colleagues from Charles Sturt University (Wagga), we estimated that in young sheep grazing a canola crop at a stocking rate of 33/ha, approximately 80% of the diet consisted of canola, with the rest coming from pasture species in the crop margins and headlands. The animals consumed over 1700 g DM/day and grew at 210 g/day.

These preliminary results indicate that canola forage has a high nutritive value and that sheep do not select against it relative to other plant species. All canola cultivars tested recovered well after grazing, which had either no impact on seed yield (2004) or caused a yield reduction worth considerably less than the value of the grazing itself (2005). There is thus potential in higher-rainfall environments for using long-season, dual-purpose canolas in rotation with long-season, dual-purpose wheats. Our larger-scale evaluations of this potential are now being supported by the Grains Research and Development Corporation.



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**The Grassland Society of NSW is very grateful to Wrightson Seeds  
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## **Grain & Graze comes to the Border Rivers of NSW & Queensland**

*Carol Harris, NSW DPI, Glen Innes*

New opportunities to better incorporate livestock in the total farming system are expected to emerge from the national Grain & Graze project now gathering momentum in the Border Rivers region of northern NSW and southern Queensland.

Grain & Graze is the largest research and extension program of its type to offer Australia's mixed farmers the opportunity to significantly increase their profitability while better managing their natural resources. The national Grain & Graze project is sponsored by Land & Water Australia, Meat & Livestock Australia, Australian Wool Innovation and the Grains Research & Development Corporation.

Grain & Graze has come to the Border Rivers region under a collaborative effort between the Primary Industries Innovation Centre (PIIC) - a partnership between NSW DPI and the University of New England, the Border River-Gwydir Catchment Management Authority, the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee, the CSIRO, and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries.

This partnership will provide producers in the Border Rivers area with the tools to effectively incorporate pastures into cropping systems and improve on-farm productivity while managing their natural resources in line with catchment targets.

The Border Rivers region of northern NSW and southern Queensland spans a diverse and highly variable climatic range where both winter and summer crop and pasture species are useful components of the system. The challenge is to get the balance of species right to develop productive & sustainable systems. Specific research topics to be investigated for the Border Rivers area include; analysing systems on the basis of whole farm profitability, improving the reliability of establishment and production of pasture species, the better management of soil moisture and N when making the transition between crops and pastures and understanding the role of pastures to improvements in catchment health.

Most of the PIIC research activities are being conducted at the University of New England property Douglas McMaster Research Station at Warialda. This research

station is ideally situated in the Border Rivers catchment and is typical of farms in the area.

The main project at McMaster will investigate the effect of integrating and improving the pasture enterprises on mixed farming at a whole-farm scale. This project will include the use of innovative precision agriculture technology to measure the impact of treatments.

Additionally at McMaster, two UNE undergraduate projects will investigate the question of whether or not cattle grazing on black cracking clays have an adverse effect on subsequent crops. These studies will provide data on the impact of livestock on self-mulching black of the Border Rivers region. Guidelines will be developed to assist producers weigh up the advantages & disadvantages of allowing stock onto cropping country.

Pasture experiments at McMaster will underpin the whole-farm scale study. Trials have been established to investigate appropriate pasture species for the catchment including perennial grass/legume pastures in conjunction with CSIRO, alternative pasture legumes and new lucerne and tall fescue varieties.

The long-standing crop rotation trial at Glen Innes established in 1921 will be used in the PIIC Grain & Graze program as a valuable resource to review the long-term impacts of legume pastures on production and soil health. It also provides an unique opportunity to monitor the impact of livestock on production and soil health after a long period (40 years) where the pasture phase has not been grazed. It is expected that the reintroduction of grazing will have a positive benefit to both crop productivity and soil health.

Producers will be exposed to innovative technology, field days, regionally specific courses and workshops between now and June 2008 as well as access to a number of NSW DPI PROfarm short courses, including Prograze®, LANDSCAN® and Paddock Plants.

For more information contact the project leader Carol Harris at NSW DPI Glen Innes on 6730 1900.



## **NSW DPI Receives a Grant To Study Locking Up Carbon**

NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has received a \$246,000 climate action project grant from the NSW Government to study the role of pastures in locking up carbon under a range of management practices in central and southern NSW.

NSW Minister for Primary Industries Ian Macdonald said the project is part of a wider \$2.5 million climate research program, which will help the NSW Government achieve its aim of cutting greenhouse emissions by 60 per cent by 2050.

A member of the project team, NSW DPI Soil Physics Technical Officer, Albert Oates, said with the wider community becoming increasingly aware of greenhouse gases and potential climate change, it was important the positive role of pastures in sequestering carbon within the soil be better understood and measured.

“Keeping carbon in the soil as organic material reduces the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. And increasing soil organic material improves the physical, chemical and biological properties of the soil,” he said.

Mr. Oates said Australian farmed soils were generally relatively low in soil organic carbon.

“It’s not easy to accumulate organic material in a hot, dry climate under continuous cropping.

“The pasture phase provides the opportunity to rebuild organic matter levels in the soil. Soils under permanent pasture may have the greatest potential to lock-up carbon dioxide as soil organic matter.”

The three-year project will be led by Soil Physicist Dr Yin Chan with input from Soil Chemist Dr Mark Conyers, Modeller Dr Deli Liu, Research Agronomist Dr Guangdi Li, Soil Scientist Dr Brian Murphy of DNR and Mr. Oates.

A number of district agronomists from NSW DPI will collaborate in the project, plus an additional technical officer, Ms Ros Prangnell, has been recently recruited to work on the project.

At this stage the researchers are keen to hear from farmers who may have paddocks with a known history suitable for inclusion in the study.

“Of particular interest would be paired paddocks, which allow comparisons to be made,” Mr Oates said.

“Examples include cropped versus old perennial pasture, annual pasture versus perennial and set-stocked versus rotationally grazed.

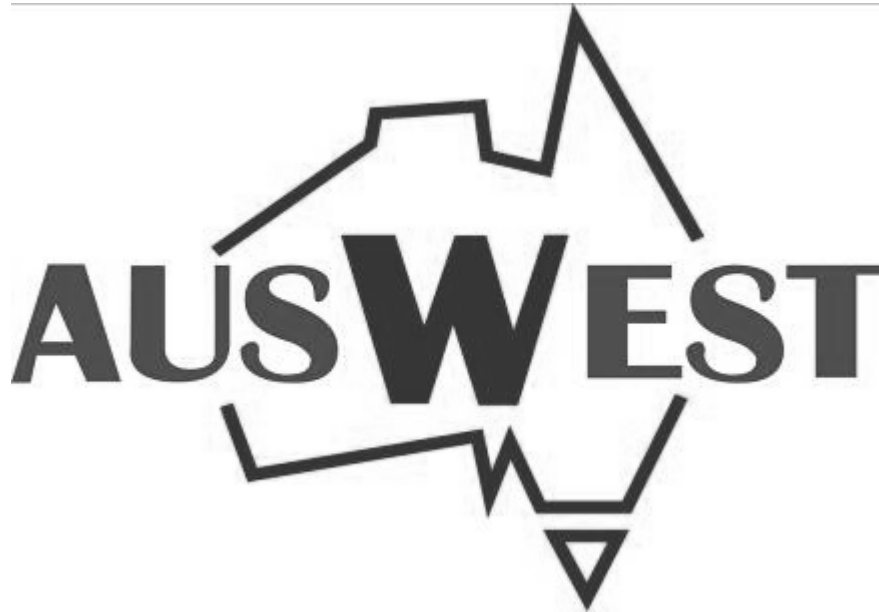
“If a farmer has a paddock likely to be of very high organic carbon status that would also be of interest.”

**Dr Chan may be contacted on (02) 4588 2108 and Mr Oates on (02) 6938 1874.**



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**Grassland Society of NSW**  
**Annual Conference, Queanbeyan 18-19 July 2007**  
**Call for Submitted papers**

The 2007 Conference of the Society will be held in the Bicentennial Hall, Queanbeyan, on 18-19 July 2007. The program will be structured around the following 4 main themes:

- Theme 1: Climate & environment
- Theme 2: Developing and managing plants for variable climates
- Theme 3: Maximising cash flow under adversity
- Theme 4: Managing on-farm water in variable climates

You are invited to submit short papers for the conference which address these themes only. The Conference Editors will strictly police this requirement, with the aim of ensuring that papers are topical and support the chosen themes, rather than being random submissions. Please encourage producer-submitted papers, by suggesting topics and helping them prepare the document.

In order to facilitate discussion at the conference, each Theme section will be structured around the following presentations:

- 1 major introductory invited paper
- A major producer paper (or second introductory paper)
- 1-2 submitted papers (see **Note**)
- A Discussion/Questions session for all speakers

**Note:** The submitted papers included within each section will be chosen by the Editors from those received (or by direct invitation if a suitable one is not received). Five minutes will be allowed for the authors to present their paper, using a maximum of three slides (Powerpoint).

Please forward papers under the above themes using the following format:

- Papers should be no more than 2 pages in length, including figures and tables
- Please do not include any photographs in papers
- A sample paper has been attached in a separate file to guide preparation
- Note that papers will not be formally refereed. However, to ensure a high standard of papers, the editors urge you to obtain and respond to comments on your draft paper from at least 2 colleagues.

To assist in the preparation of papers, a 'sample paper' can be obtained from either Hugh Dove ([hugh.dove@csiro.au](mailto:hugh.dove@csiro.au)) or Denys Garden

([denys.garden@csiro.au](mailto:denys.garden@csiro.au)). Completed papers should be submitted by email to [hugh.dove@csiro.au](mailto:hugh.dove@csiro.au) no later than Friday 27th April 2007.

At the Conference itself, submitted papers will be presented as posters. The preparation of posters is your responsibility. Posters must be on display by the time the conference commences (preferably the afternoon before), and remain in place until the conference has finished.



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## **Survey reveals widespread damage to roots of sub clover in autumn-winter**

A team from CSIRO Plant Industry, the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) and the University of Western Australia have found extensive damage to roots of sub clover in permanent pastures on the southern tablelands and south-west slopes of NSW, south east SA and south west WA in a bioassay of 18 paddocks using Woogenellup sub clover as the test plant. The study was conducted during the 2006 autumn-winter period and was funded under the Pasture Soil Biology Initiative of Meat and Livestock Australia, Australian Wool Innovation and the Grains Research and Development Corporation.

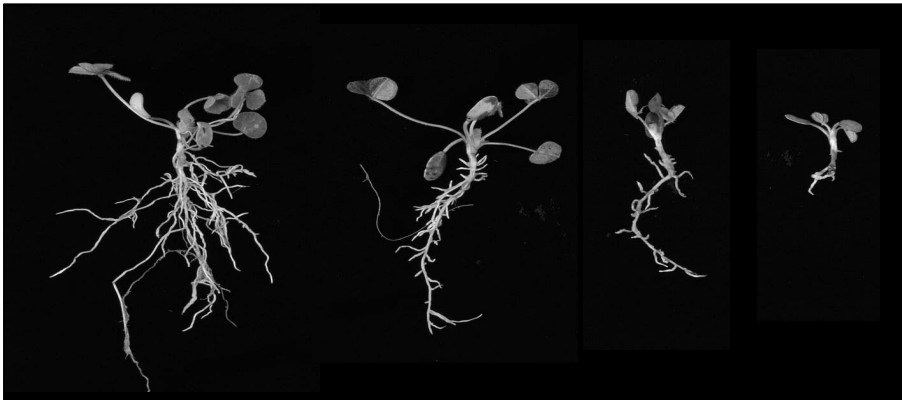
This work was revisiting research results from the 1960's and 70's which flagged the occurrence of similar damage to roots due to root rot fungi. The cause of the damage in the recent survey was not specifically investigated but symptoms were consistent with damage expected of root rotting fungi. New DNA probes developed by the SARDI researchers were employed to assess which of the commonly-know root rot fungi were present in the paddocks being surveyed and have confirmed the presence of *Pythium* (clade F), *Phytophthora clandestina* and a range of other potential pathogens in the paddocks surveyed.

Although seasonal conditions during 2006 were not expected to be good for root diseases, extensive seedling losses and damage to roots of the plants that had managed to establish was observed over a wide area. There were no paddocks that were free of root damage. In the best paddock, only 60% of roots on surviving sub clover plants were undamaged. On average across all sites, only a third of the sub clover test plants had undamaged root systems.

The occurrence of root damage at every site in the survey revives previous concerns that root rots may still constitute a persistent and costly constraint to production – the issue deserves further attention.

Good news from the survey is that plant survival in a well-fertilised, well-stocked pasture was significantly better than in a comparable but low input, low-stocked pasture. This provides some assurance that good practice was not associated with increased root damage and appears to have improved the chances of the clover and ryegrass test plants surviving.

A pressing task now, is to estimate the cost of autumn-winter pasture yields and to explore whether it is possible to manage pasture soil biology in ways that can reduce root damage and provide extra feed in winter. The DNA probes used in this work are currently being further developed for use as monitoring tools for assessment of disease potential in pastures.



Relatively undamaged roots, and moderate to severe damage to roots of Woogenellup sub clover from a paddock on the NSW south west slopes. The proportion of sub clover plants with undamaged roots in this paddock was less than 10%. The adverse impact on shoot growth is fairly obvious.

The research team: *Richard Simpson, Alan Richardson (CSIRO Plant Industry, Canberra); Ian Riley, Alan McKay, Ross Ballard, Suzanne McKay (SARDI, Adelaide); Tiernan O'Rourke, Martin Barbetti, Krishnapillai Sivasithamparam, Hua Li (University of Western Australia, Perth).*

**Contacts:** Dr Richard Simpson: CSIRO Plant Industry GPO Box 1600 Canberra ACT 2601, [richard.simpson@csiro.au](mailto:richard.simpson@csiro.au), tel: 02 6246 5364  
Dr Bob Hannam: Co-ordinator Pasture Soil Biology Program, [rhannam@ozemail.com.au](mailto:rhannam@ozemail.com.au), tel: 0407 606 383



## **The Future of Australian Agriculture**

### **Drought and Climate Change**

*Jim Litchfield, 8th November 2006*

The following article appeared in a recent edition of the Marcus Oldham College Graduates newsletter, MOCOSA.

Having been asked to say a little about Hazeldean and the direction the company is taking and how we see the future of agriculture I could not ignore the backdrop of what we are experiencing right now. Drought and climate change. Are the two connected? How will we deal with it?

Whether they are connected we do not know for sure. There is ample evidence that Australia has suffered extended dry periods before and the latest bout is not outside the bounds of normal variation -yet. However, all of us are concerned that this current drought and global warming issue may not be the simple co-incidence some say and the downside is so unimaginable and gloomy that to ignore the implications of climate change is simply not a tenable position.

The prospects for the world as we know it are concerning and as farmers we are on the frontline when it comes to the effects of these changes. We will wear them first. Whatever our views on climate change might be the simple fact is that if the worst case scenario happens to be true we are in serious trouble and we therefore should plan for this contingency.

So how has that affected what we do at Hazeldean? Before I deal with that question lets look at the other backdrop. With drought and climate change aside for one minute we see the short to medium term in agriculture as very positive. The world's economy is awash with money, disposable incomes of the wealthy are at an all time high, the area available for extensive livestock production (i.e. animals eating grass) is becoming less available, demand for meat products is growing at an unprecedented rate and the world's big population centres continue to swing towards Western culture and foodstuffs. In the depths of the wool depression we used to do the sum on every Chinese buying a pair of wool socks and came up with a very encouraging number. If we do the same calculation for steak or lamb chops I am sure the answer will be equally cheerful. And it is happening..

With that said costs continue to rise and the law of declining terms of trade is a perennial that will not go away and necessitates that farmers build scale and

efficiencies to remain viable long term. This is even more pressing now as many of us face declining stocking rates on the country we currently hold due to extended drought. The old mantra of improving pasture as the more cost effective way to lift carrying capacity as opposed to buying more acres may be flawed in the new era where rainfall becomes more erratic and extended dry periods more the norm. Indeed those areas that have been traditionally considered 'safe' may bear the brunt of climate change where stocking levels and production systems have been geared around a predictable rainfall event each year mostly known as the Autumn or Winter break. In contrast, areas that have not relied on a regular and predictable rainfall pattern, and have geared their stocking levels and enterprises to cope with this uncertainty, may be better placed to deal with a more erratic climate in the future.

Predictions of more frequent and extended droughts has implications also for enterprise selection and those livestock producers with the greatest flexibility to adjust stocking rates quickly and utilize measures to lock in costs and returns, will be in a stronger position. The successful grazier of the future will be quick on his feet, able to identify opportunities and be in a position to move while not over extending either his property or his finances.

At Hazeldean we are taking a conservative stance at present. We feel in many respects we are in uncharted waters with the implications of climate change not fully understood by neither us nor the country generally. Under the old model we always knew there was going to be droughts, and part of our planning always had a contingency for these events. We are just not sure what the new model is going to be like.

Whatever it is, we are placing ourselves in a position to be able to withstand prolonged adverse seasons and be available to capitalize quickly on opportunities as they appear.

*The Grassland Society of NSW gratefully acknowledges Jim Litchfield for the use of this article.*



### **From the President's desk**

The new year is now well underway and with a few exceptions, the long dry spell continues to plague much of NSW.

I note the experts' comments about the decline of El Nino and the more optimistic predictions for an improved autumn. Let's hope this happens and paves the way for a vastly better crop and pasture season in 2007.

This year's conference will be held at Queanbeyan, the scene of several very successful conferences in recent years. Already the organizing committee has come up with some novel and stimulating agenda items under the general theme of "Managing for Variable Climate". Among several changes from previous conferences, the duration will be shortened to one and a half days to accommodate busy people and to keep costs to a minimum. In addition, the conference dinner will be a less formal event where families will be encouraged to attend. The precise date is yet to be finalized subject to accommodation requirements but at this stage the conference is planned to take place between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> July. More details will be printed in the next newsletter as arrangements are firmed.

Your committee met in Orange in February and discussed a range of items aimed at improving communication and service to members. For the first time in several years the Society is offering travel grants for approved activities. Please look at the notice detailing the conditions of grants in this newsletter.

Our membership is currently just over 400, comprising primary producers, agri-business representatives, technologists and teachers of agriculture at secondary and tertiary level. We are keen to receive feedback and suggestions from members on any aspects of the Society. We avoid involvement in political matters preferring to leave that to the various producer organizations. We generally stick to all matters relevant to pasture and animal production. Our newsletter editor and honorary life member Haydn Lloyd Davies welcomes letters and comments to include in the newsletter.

I sincerely hope for an improvement in seasonal conditions to relieve the long dry spell. What a welcome change to dust off the rubber boots early in autumn.

Best wishes to all members.

***Mick Duncan***

***THE GRASSLAND SOCIETY OF NSW INC.***  
**A unique blend of people with a common interest in developing  
our most important resource – our Grasslands**

The Grassland Society of NSW was formed in March 1985. The Society now has approx. 500 members and associates, 75% of whom are farmers and graziers. The balance are agricultural scientists, farm advisers, consultants, and executives or representatives of organisations concerned with fertilisers, seeds, chemicals and machinery.

The aims of the Society are to advance the investigation of problems affecting grassland husbandry and to encourage the adoption into practice of results of research and practical experience. The Society holds an annual conference, publishes a quarterly newsletter, holds field days, and is establishing regional branches throughout the State.

Membership is open to any person or company interested in grassland management and the aims of the Society.

**OFFICE BEARERS OF THE GRASSLAND SOCIETY OF  
NSW - 2006-2007**

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