Stipa
Native Grasses Association Inc.
ABN: 42 300 161 459

Stipa promotes and proves the profitable management of native grasses by motivated people in healthy landscapes.

MEMBERSHIPAPPLICATION/RENEWAL

Name: .....

Company or trading name: .....

Address: .....

.....

Town: ..... State: ..... Postcode: .....

Phone: ..... Mobile: .....

Email: .....

Annual membership (please select one – note that subscriptions include GST):

☐ ACT & NSW $75 ☐ Interstate $45 ☐ Student $30 ☐ Corporate $500

Payment options (please select one):

☐ **Cheque/money order** (to Stipa Native Grasses Association Inc.) for $..... is enclosed.

☐ **Direct deposit:** Deposit of $..... made on ..... (date).
Stipa Native Grasses Association account at Westpac BSB: 032 647 Account: 108 924
Please include your surname in the reference field to help us match your payment to your membership.

Send your completed membership form (with your payment, if applicable) to:
Stipa Native Grasses Association, PO Box 224, WELLINGTON NSW 2820

For more information contact Stipa CEO Graeme Hand on 0418 532 130, fax 03 5578 6370 or email graeme.hand@bigpond.com

Stipa Native Grasses Association aims to:
•promote native grass as pasture and for conservation • educate the community about native grasses • document pasture systems using native grass • distribute information to agencies and landholders • network with other groups with complementary activities.

Newsletter

Number 43

December 2009

Stipa
Native Grasses Association Inc

Native grasses regenerating near Burra, South Australia

www.stipa.com.au

Central West catchment management authority
Together We're Making a Difference LACHLAN CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY
Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry National Landcare Program
VANGUARD BUSINESS SERVICES

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STIPA is not an acronym. The association was named after the *Stipa* genus of grasses, now *Austrostipa*. One of the *Stipas* is commonly known as spear grass. At its inception in 1997, the association aimed to spearhead a change in attitude to native grasses. As that change is occurring, Stipa continues to promote the use of native grasses to achieve profit from a healthy landscape.

Stipa Native Grasses Association (ABN 42 300 161 459)
www.stipa.com.au

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Treasurer: George Taylor E: gandktaylor@activ8.net.au

This Newsletter was produced by Karen Pearce, Bloom Communication.
www.bloomcommunication.com.au

Stipa Perennial Calendar

You can keep it as a reference or use it any year.

A grass or grassland plant is featured each month, with identification, growth habits & grazing information.

$20 each

(including postage & GST)

For more information or another order form contact:
Stipa Native Grasses Association
T 03 5578 6321/0418 532 130
F 03 5578 6370
E: graeme.hand@bigpond.com

Name:_____

Address:_____

Phone:_____

Email:_____

Number of copies_____

Post cheque/money order to Stipa Native Grasses Association Inc.

PO Box 224, Wellington, NSW, 2820

Or to pay by EFT:

Account name: Stipa Native Grasses Association

Westpac—BSB: 032 647 Acc No: 108 924

(Fax this form or email graeme.hand@bigpond.com to let me know and don’t forget to reference your EFT deposit).

Attention all members

To ensure that you continue to receive Stipa newsletters and updates, please remember to advise us of any change of address.

Also if you wish to receive emails about forthcoming events and other matters of interest, it is important that we have your correct email address.

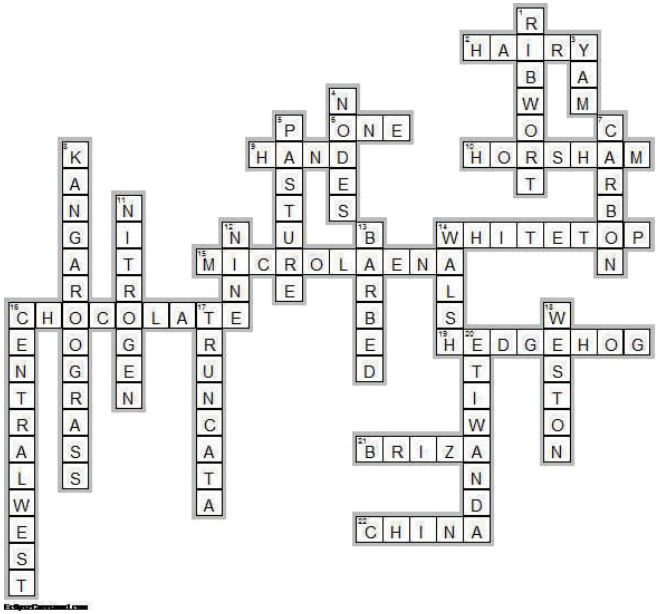
Membership

Please Note

Stipa is changing the way they renew memberships. We will endeavour to mail out your renewal tax invoice one month prior to your expiry date. If you would like to renew please mail us a cheque or EFT your membership.

Please remember to make reference on all EFT's and return cheques your INVOICE NUMBER (found on the top of your Stipa tax invoice).

Crossword solution



From the Chair

Annabel Walsh

It gives me great pleasure to report that Stipa is well and truly alive and kicking.

The past twelve months have been both challenging and interesting for the Stipa committee. The completion of the successful wealth and drought training courses and the initiation of the three Caring for our Country projects are keeping Stipa active within the farming community.

The challenges have come from the change that we have had to make to comply with the demands of funding limitations, governance and keeping the administration running smoothly. Xanthe's working time was reduced to two days a week, while Graeme is now working one day a week. This is functioning for the moment.

Stipa still has a very important role, continuing with plant identification days, encouraging innovation and dialogue amongst our members, and supporting our committee and members to work with other landholders and organisations.

Stipa's fundamental principles are about working with the natural system in cropping and grazing systems, through the promotion of native plant species and rich, healthy pastures and soils. The natural system sequesters and builds soil carbon, lowering farm imputes and increasing profit. Most importantly working with the natural system will create a more resilient landscape to cope with the extremes of weather that we have been experiencing.

Travelling to the Orange field days in October via Broken Hill, Willcannia, and Cobar, and seeing first hand the damage the dust storm had done to the vegetation, made me realise how in control nature is. It is important for us to reflect on and be reactive to these indicators, and to manage for a resilient landscape.

We as an organisation feel we can contribute in a practical way to encourage landholders, scientists and agencies to work together with politicians. This contribution to local, national and international arenas will help develop systems that address environmental challenges associated with land and water management. Only then can we provide clean water and healthy food to meet increasing demands.

As the emissions trading debate rages nationally and internationally, Stipa is working hard to ensure that the ground rules that dictate the trading scheme recognise the value of our farming systems and grazing practices in sequestering carbon. Stipa is also working hard to establish and encourage the research and development needed to measure carbon sequestering. This is a tough task.

Again many thanks to Graeme and Xanthe, George Taylor our treasurer and to our committee. We also welcome Christine McRae to our executive, and Gus Arnott, from the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority, and Mike Bryon to our committee. We really look forward to the passion and energy they will bring to our society.

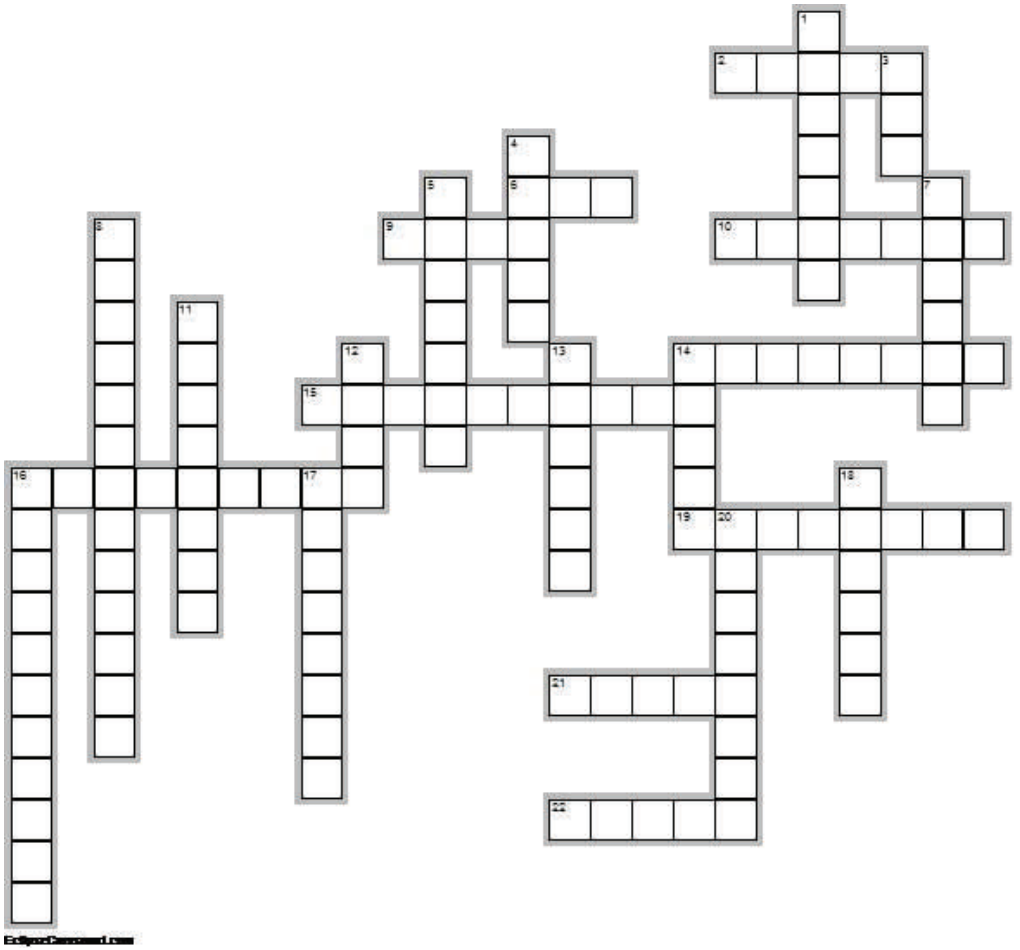
LEFT: Graeme Hand and Annabel Walsh at the Orange National Field Days.

Stipa caps for sale

$12 + postage

Contact Stipa for more information

0418 532 130



17. This short-statured *Chloris* species (windmill grass) is a good colonizer of disturbed ground

18. A type of fencing system developed by a long term Stipa member, helps in managing total grazing pressure

20. The name of Megan and Andrew Mosely's property near Cobar

Solution over page

Crossword

Christine McRae

Across

2. _ _ _ _ _ panic

6. How many awns do *Austrostipa* species have?

9. Stipa's CEO Graeme _ _ _ _

10. Where was the last Stipa conference held?

14. Another common name for wallaby grass

15. Weeping grass?

16. A fragrant lily which may be found in well managed paddocks

19. A spiny name for an Australian native grass

21. Quaking and shivery grasses belong to which genus?

22. In what country was the 2008 International Rangelands/ Grasslands Congress held?

Down

1. Common name for an exotic *Plantago* species

3. _ _ _ daisy, formerly an important food source of the Australian Aborigines

4. Where would you find the 'ballet skirts' on wild sorghum?

5. A type of cropping advocated by Stipa which builds soil biota

7. Good grazing management enhances the increase of this element in the soil

8. Common name of a native grass named after an Australian macropod

11. Legumes help fix this atmospheric element into the soil

12. How many awns do bottlewashers have?

13. *Cymbopogon refractus* is named after this type of wire

14. Annabel _ _ _ _ _ is the new chairman of Stipa

16. Which CMA funded the WeaLtH and On Farm projects?

From the CEO

Graeme Hand

In this report:

- Funding
- Orange National Field Days
- AGM
- Update on Stipa project in mid-north of South Australia
- Communities in Landscapes project
- Native grass trials

Funding

Stipa has been successful in partnering with other organisations on two Caring for our Country projects detailed later in this report. This has provided funding for Stipa to continue to promote the management and use of native grasses in broadscale agriculture.

Orange National Field Days

Stipa had a stand in the Lachlan and Central West Catchment Management Authority pavilion at this event which was manned by Annabel, Sam, Hilary, George and myself.

Although only a few people stopped to discuss native grasses, the ones that did were after detailed, in-depth information.

AGM

The Stipa AGM was held in Orange during the Orange field days. There was a good turn up and a very positive attitude regarding the future of Stipa. For me, the most constructive part of the meeting was 'other business' when Annabel asked each person in turn for their ideas on the future of Stipa. This resulted in an inspiring discussion of ideas on Stipa's role.

Office bearers elected at the AGM are:

Chair: Annabel Walsh
Treasurer: George Taylor
Executive: Christine McRae
Committee: Gus Arnott and Mike Byron
Public Officer: Steve Kiss

Enclosure showing the amount of growth possible where stock access is controlled

Ground cover and growth from active management—long recovery and planned grazing

Project in mid-north South Australia

This project, in partnership with Mid North Grasslands Working Group and Greening Australia, has just completed the second meeting with some interesting field walks.

It was clear that perennial grass recovery has a significant impact on available ground cover and feed. Pasture cropping and increased impact and recovery were producing significant changes in feed produced through difficult seasons.

The final meeting for farmers to present results and future plans is planned for early March 2010.

Communities in Landscapes: Working together to integrate conservation and production across box-gum woodlands.

The $4.2 million 'Communities in Landscapes' project will run for two years from November 2009. Led by Landcare NSW this Caring for our Country project aims to achieve management that better integrates conservation and production to maintain and enhance the condition of box-gum grassy woodland ecosystems at a landscape scale. We work with individuals, community groups and NRM agencies across the wheat-sheep belt in the Central West, Lachlan and Murrumbidgee catchments to generate consistent and reliable information and disseminate it through relevant networks.

A key aspect of the project is to work with innovative land managers who are successfully integrating conservation and

I had done quite a lot of research on the best native grasses for a lawn-like effect, and the only one recommended seems to be weeping grass. There's quite lot of info on the web. The fact that it is naturally found in ACT was an added plus for me. I obtained the seed from a rural supplier in Bungendore. It was expensive! But I'm glad I stuck with the plan.

It was autumn and a good time to spread the seed. We sprinkled it fairly generously, and covered it with an even (not deep) layer of chopped lucerne (in huge bags from a garden centre). I watered it most days and there was some rain. Of course, like all seeds, this is the danger period – all that work and the little sprouts die of thirst!

The grass became visible through the lucerne in two weeks, a bit patchy, but it all caught up and before long I had a green sward.

We mowed in early summer, by which time it was quite tall and beginning to develop seed heads.

It has a nice graceful form with drooping flower stems. The areas in constant shade were lusher and greener, but the rest was still doing fine, green and thickening up. Now it seems necessary to mow occasionally. This summer, the good rains, made it grow really fast. We have not watered it at all this summer, and it's still quite greenish.

The eucalypts have recovered well too. They were really sick with lerps after drought, neglect, loss of topsoil and root disturbance. I got a tree expert in and the dead branches were judiciously taken out. Then they injected the soil with something that would reduce the lerps infestation, and improve the root function. It was expensive too, but has worked a treat. The trees are truly magnificent now.

You are welcome to peek over my hedge if you like: 1 Way Street , O'Connor.

Contact Stipa
Ph: 03 5578 6321 Fax: 03 5578 6370
Email: graeme.hand@bigpond.com

A lovely weeping grass lawn

Helen Bayes

I established a weeping grass (*Microlaena stipoides*) lawn about two years ago, under two huge, very old *Eucalyptus blakelyi* in our garden in O'Connor, ACT. It is hardy, good looking, copes well with endless gum leaves and bark, and stays greener than exotic lawns.

The site had been scraped clean by the ACT Housing folk before the house was sold. Then I had done a lot of renovations, including new sewers, so the ground had been very disturbed, and depleted.

We first spread generous quantities of gypsum and blood-and-bone over the entire area. Then we dug over deeply with a strong fork and broke up the lumps. After that hard work, we left it to rest for a couple of weeks and then raked it level.

production, so that the principles they have developed can be made clear and be applied by others across the landscape. We will also be seeking groups of land managers interested in working with us to develop across property plans which integrate production and conservation in their location.

A critical part of the project involves learning from land managers operating in the target areas to understand the key issues from their point of view. Project participants need to develop a unified picture of the aims of the project that is based on knowledge of land managers' circumstances. To do this we are using a team of people (project partners and locals) to conduct up to 30 on-site interviews of land managers and other key stakeholders at two locations in the target area. The interviews will collect some historical information, document experiences and canvass views on natural resource management from the landholder's perspective. The team will meet to discuss the interviews and build up a rich picture to guide the overall project.

Stipa members are already involved in many levels of this project, including providing design input on how native grasses can be regenerated and their contribution to a stable, resilient farm business.

For more details, or if you would like to be involved, please contact me.

Native grass trials (Victorian Volcanic Plains – Caring for our Country)

Stipa is partnering with the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority for a series of workshops to trial the regeneration of native grasses in production areas of the Victorian Volcanic Plain which runs in a band west of Ballarat through to the SA border.

This project will be based on the successful On Farm projects and Mid North projects and will include workshops and on farm visits.

If you are interested in more detail or would like to be involved in this project please contact me.

To contact Graeme Hand
call 03 5578 6321 or
0418 532 130, or email
graeme.hand@bigpond.com

On Farm Project Series presentations

As noted in the June/July 2009 Newsletter the On Farm Project presentations by the farmers of their results and possible future trials was very exciting. A key point was the number of positive results obtained even though rainfall was variable. This is a clear indication that many of the practices that favour the regeneration of native grasses are also adapted for future climate variability. The importance of highly diverse native grasslands will continue to grow.

Following are more presentations from the On Farm Project series.

Pasture cropping on "Galwary"

Anne Burns, "Galwary", Eugowra

Site selection

The reasons for employing pasture cropping are reducing costs, increasing profit, growing fodder (and potentially grain), stimulating pasture, repairing soil structure, creating litter and ground cover, and improving soil biological health.

Western 6 exhibited an increased incidence of native perennial colonisation from adjacent paddocks that have never been intensively cropped.

Western 6 exhibited a typical pasture mix for cells that have historically been used to crop wheat before the introduction of cell grazing six years ago.

The site is in an easily managed location, so stock can be selectively grazed or excluded as that cell is not central to stock movement and control.

Site conditions

These areas are gently undulating to rolling slopes 0-12%, elevation 270-300 m, with granite boulders on some crests, and cleared open woodland.

The soil exhibits moderately deep (100-150 cm) well drained earthy sands. The soil structure has derived *in situ* on Devonian (Eugowra) granite.

These areas have high run-on, and soil erosion hazards, rock outcrops, localised low or high

and increased annuals and perennials. There was 95% ground cover at site C, mostly perennials (especially windmill grass).

Site A 24/4/09

Site B 24/4/09

Site C 24/4/09

Significant rainfall events

November 65 mm
December 25 mm
January 0 mm
February 55 mm
March 0 mm
April 70 mm.

What we have learned

Cattle have a greater and deeper impact on the soil than sheep.

Rest is important. It was almost five months between taking the sheep out and putting the cattle in.

The pioneer plants were annuals (site A). Then perennials replace annuals (site B).

What we will change

We will aim for longer rest periods to encourage greater ground cover and perenniality.

We will try to use cattle impact to break up crusty soil.

In the long term, we will subdivide into smaller paddocks to have more control of the above.

permeability and stoniness, and low fertility, though they are capable of sustained grazing and occasional cropping.

Monitoring

Where possible inspections will be also carried out after high rainfall events.

Grass check sites will use photography to document changes over time.

Western paddock, Spring 2008

Western 6, post Gramoxone, April 2009

Grazing for what we want to protect and spread of desired species.

Future plans

Select additional cells suitable for pasture cropping in 2010.

Continue to monitor species diversity and spread in Western 6 as a case study.

Implement a no kill strategy in February 2010 in selected paddocks as an on-farm trial.

Agrow drill with coulters

Oats in dry conditions

Biological inputs

Frances Taylor-Wood, "Yamin Vale", Orange

I purchased the property in April 2006 and since then have been 'learning' about farming. The 130 ha property had been at rest for at least 12 months prior to our purchase, therefore, the quantity and quality of the ground cover was good compared to the surrounding properties. Water through the nine dams was adequate, although five were dry by 2007, which meant we relied on troughs and pumping from the bore.

My ad-hoc management practices worked, however, I have now adopted a holistic management approach and implemented a grazing plan based on 150 days rest in the slow growth period and 90 days rest in the growing period.

Objective

To determine if biological inputs improved the pasture and increased biodiversity.

I wanted to determine if feeding the biology in the soil would improve the pasture growth based on 'feeding' the existing microorganisms as opposed to the more traditional approach of introducing Microorganisms via a 'compost tea' then maintaining the activity via 'feeding'.

This test was designed to be low input and primarily based on observation.

The 'feed' is a liquid made up of humic acid, fish emulsion, bioactive kelp and molasses. Two applications were suggested, one in the spring and the other in the autumn. The application should be made after rain for the best effect at a rate of 6 litres to the hectare.

The trial areas were grazed with cows and calves at a 500 DSE (33 X 15.13) for 16 days between 25 September – 11 October.

Excellent animal impact and ground cover

Approx.600 ewes were left in the paddock for about 24 hours.

Small piles of millet were dropped onto each site to attract the sheep.

3 March 2009

The sites were monitored. Increased plant growth at all sites was noted. After approximately five months of rest, cattle were put in for 24 hours for animal impact and to graze.

Small amount of annual growth present at site A. At site B there was increased ground cover and some perennials. Site C had less groundcover than previously. There was less couch and more perennials, e.g. windmill grass.

Site A 3/3/09

Site B 3/3/09

Site C 3/3/09

24 April 2009

The site was monitored again. It was noted that there was increased ground cover at all sites as well as a change in species.

Site A had some annual herbage Ground cover was 25%. Site B had about 65% ground cover

Trial to investigate if animal impact and planned recovery regenerate native grassland

Liz and Dick Hemphill, "Quilbone", Quambone

Purpose

To monitor growth after animal impact and with full rest on bare ground (site A), minimum ground cover (site B) and 90% ground cover (site C).

The project area was a small holding paddock, about 2 ha, well-watered ground, cover approx 40%.

Starting date: 9 October 2008

Site A had hard crusty red soil 0% ground cover. No smell. Slaking=3. Dispersion=3. Minimal roots.

Site B also had hard red soil, but not so crusty. About 30% ground cover. Sweet smell. Slaking=1. Dispersion=1. Roots present to about 15 cm. Annual herbage. No perennials.

Site C had softer red soil with about 90% ground cover including litter. Sweet smell. Dispersion and slaking=2. Roots to 30 cm.

Site A 9/10/08

Site B 9/10/08

Site C 9/10/08

The first application was made on 25 November after 37 mm of rain.

Property description

The property is situated 19 km west of Orange. The gently undulating country has an elevation from 700 m to 739 m and predominantly basalt soils with a significant limestone outcrop.

An un-named semi-dry creek is located in the southern section of the property. Due to the periodic high-velocity flow, the erosion along the water course is quite severe. Rabbit/fox warrens are present along a third of the creek line. The banks are reasonably stable and have had minimal trampling from stock over the past two years. Native grasses and trees are present as are introduced species and willows.

Soils

An overall assessment of soils on "Yamin Vale" indicates:

Depth: A moderate to deep depth based on observation and post hole digging. (Shallower soils may occur on the hill areas)

Drainage: The soil is generally well drained; however, several imperfectly drained soil areas have been identified and are highlighted on the property overlays.

Texture: Generally the texture is loam ranging from fine sandy loam to sandy clay loam.

Colour: Overall red to reddish brown.

pH: More acidic than I would like, range 5-6 at a 10 cm depth test.

Stones: The property has several stony areas and three major limestone rock outcrops.

Salinity: No indication of salinity problems.

Vegetation

Very little native vegetation remains on the property. All native understorey has been removed and replaced with improved pasture species or weeds. Dead and dying trees are present; there is very little natural regeneration of trees and none of shrubs. The remaining trees are under some stress and their health may be deteriorating. However, there is little mistletoe present but the cattle do camp under trees and rub on the trees. The main species are *Eucalyptus melliodora, E. blakelyi* and *E. bridgesiana.*

Result and conclusion

There was no massive wow look at the difference. I was advised to maybe expect a 15-20% difference.

Red grass regenerating in *Phalaris* pasture

I do think there was an improved growth response in the trial paddock but certainly no greater that 15%.

The *Phalaris* in the top half was thicker. The other main observation was the flea bane was significantly less in the trial area than the untreated area.

Conclusion

In the future I would utilise the animal impact more significantly before applying more biological 'feed. Once the animals have stimulated the soil and we have better rain to assist the stimulation and enough rest to allow the plants to recover it would be interesting to see the condition of the soil and the biological activity.

It is possible (from others' anecdotal evidence) that even the soil disturbance alone, without the growing oat crop, may provide some level of stimulus to the existing native grasses. Hopefully, this will be the case.

We were pleased with the actual sowing method (450 mm/18 inch spacing) with the level of soil disturbance being minimal. The oats were starting to germinate, however, at this time we were overcome with large number of grasshoppers which proceeded to destroy most of the crop.

Because of the effect of the grasshoppers, no real result can be shown following the 'no kill' cropping method.

Despite the fact that the oat crop will probably not recover (or perhaps to a very limited extent), it will be interesting to see over the season whether the limited amount of soil disturbance in itself will lead to any increase in the volume and diversity of native grasses.

Management changes and future plans

As a result of the project, we will be continuing with the more intensive grazing management currently being employed on the property. This will allow our paddocks longer periods of rest/ recovery in between grazing events.

The process of further subdividing our grazing paddocks will continue as resources allow. It is likely that even smaller paddocks would be of greater benefit to what we are trying to achieve.

However our constraints in terms of time and the increased frequency of having to move cattle from paddock to paddock is a limiting factor at the present time.

The 'no kill' cropping trial did show some early promise, but due to circumstances largely beyond our control, did not work out this time.

We will be likely to try this method again in future, whether it be re-sowing oats again this season or trying again next year.

Keep up to date with Stipa news and activities in between Newsletters

Visit the Stipa website at **www.stipa.com.au**

The sowing went well and the crop had started to germinate, with a good strike of oats emerging nicely in rows among the existing grasses, when we encountered another problem – *grasshoppers!*

They arrived in large numbers and proceeded to chew off the crop right back to ground level. It is not expected to make a good recovery, however it is hoped that some of the crop will remain.

15 April 2009. The typical level of ground disturbance created using the no-kill method.

15 April 2009. Close-up view of the undisturbed grasses remaining between rows.

The idea of using the 'no kill' cropping method to provide some extra winter feed as well as stimulating the native grasses has not worked in this instance.

We are currently deciding whether to re-plant the area, or to continue monitoring the situation and see what level of recovery is achieved.

15 April 2009. A paddock immediately before it was sown with oats ('no kill' cropping method). This paddock was grazed a little more heavily prior to sowing to reduce the bulk of grass and allow better conditions for the seed to germinate.

The same area 11 days following sowing with oats.

Regenerating paddocks dominated by woody weeds

Tony Gilmour, "Happy Valley", Gilgandra

Project aim

To reverse the encroachment of woody weeds in the most effective and ecological way. To retain ground cover and promote perennial grasses.

Main problem woody weeds

The main woody weeds are emu bush, wait a while and cotton bush.

Woody weeds limiting use of paddock

Emu bush

Wait a while

Cotton bush

Before views

Methods

Method 1: Animal impact - herd effect 2000 DSE/ha

Method 2: Chemical - Graslan pellets 20/11/2008

Method 3: Mechanical - Crimp Roller 14/11/08 & 23/3/09

well to the rainfall after a reasonable period of rest.

28 February 2009

In the photo of the same paddock seven days later (above) you can see that the grass growth has been quite significant in a relatively short period. We believe that due to the extended period of rest, it responded better to the February rainfall than other paddocks which were not so well rested.

13 May 2009

Rainfall received in the period from the end of February to mid-May was 53 mm. The bulk of grass cover is still very good, as well as the fact that we had also had a grazing event in this time.

'No kill' cropping trial

The idea of a pasture cropping trial as part of this project also appealed to us from the beginning.

Given the grazing trial did not result in the clear demonstration of the positive effect of animal impact, we decided that pasture cropping would also be worth a try to see if any stimulus of native grasses could be shown.

The sowing of oats using the 'no kill' method commenced on 15 April 2009. Immediately prior to sowing cattle were grazed more intensively to try and remove the bulk of grass cover and therefore hopefully allow the oats to establish more easily.

The crop was sown at 450 mm (18 inch) row spacing with narrow points at a rate of 40 kg/ha seed. No fertilizer or sprays were applied.

We were aiming for a minimal level of ground disturbance so as not to create too much of an adverse affect on the existing grasses and ground cover. We were also trying to keep the operation as low in input costs as possible.

total rest and some level of meaningful animal impact is to subdivide the grazing paddocks.

Initially there were seven grazing paddocks equating to an average area of 83 hectares (205 acres). Being limited by the amount of existing water points, we have subdivided these grazing paddocks to create 15 paddocks with an average size of 39 hectares (96 acres).

This smaller paddock size has been successful in providing total rest to a larger area of the property, for a longer period of time.

We have aimed for a period of 150 days rest between grazing events. This has not always been possible, however the paddocks which have been subjected to the longer period of rest certainly showed the positive effects.

A trial area was fenced out of the corner of one paddock. For the amount of cattle in that paddock at that time, this would have equated to a stocking density of 1000 DSE per hectare. It was intended to leave the cattle in this enclosure for one day, then subject the area to total rest and monitor the results.

Unfortunately, this trial area did not go entirely to plan. The cattle did indeed graze the area for a day, but the desired level of animal impact was not achieved. However, we have subjected the area to total rest since this time and the area does appear to have recovered slightly better than the adjoining area.

The wet period over February was a blessing, although it led to good grass growth over most of the property (not that we are complaining!) which made the contrast in grazing management more difficult to define.

Some photos of this area were taken, but there is a period where photos are not available.

21 February 2009

The paddock above was grazed quite heavily in early October 2008. All cattle were moved out on 20 October. It received total rest until early March 2009 (approximately 130 days). Over this time it received 206 mm of rainfall. Most of this fell about seven days before this photo was taken. Note the abundance of new green shoots of grass responding

Results

Animal impact

Chemical

Mechanical

Discussion



LEFT TO RIGHT: Animal impact, chemical and mechanical

Animal impact

Free except for wire and water. High density in laneway taped into four sections (1 ha each).

156 cattle + 840 weathers = 2000 DSE. 1 day per section (6/11/08, 9/1/09, 23/3/09)

Chemical

Graslan pellets at label rate, applied 20/11/08. Loss of grasses and ground cover. Did not kill cotton bush.

Mechanical

Fast and effective. 12 m roller at 5 km/h = 6 ha/hr. Application of biological mixes at the same time possible. Leaves grasses intact and turns bushes into mulch. (Note: Thanks to Central West CMA who helped pay for me to build it.)

ABOVE: Next door's solution - push up with loader and burn
BELOW: The trial site

Conclusion

Using the roller and including some additives to promote breakdown of the woody weeds looks to be the first instance option. This should be followed up with grazing at the highest stock density I can muster.

Thanks to Stipa, Xanthe White, Graeme Hand, the on farm visit hosts and the rest of the group for an enjoyable and productive workshop.

Trial areas: Native grass grazing management and 'no kill' cropping trial

Stephen, Marg & Mick Redfern, "Wilga", Albert

Project description

Our project got off to a bit of a slow start. As this was our first time a project such as this, the process of monitoring, setting up photo points and taking regular photos took a bit of getting used to.

Prior to this project, we had committed ourselves to the idea that we needed to change the way we graze and manage our stock. Our current production system on "Wilga" is based on cattle grazing with a limited amount of cropping. There are no sheep at all in the enterprise mix.

We recognised that an improvement to our grazing management was required to ensure that there was adequate grass in the paddocks for the amount of stock we were carrying.

We were also keen to put into practice a system where plants were given adequate rest to allow them to recover and regenerate before being grazed again. Coming from a 'set stocking' background, this was also a change for us.

Planned grazing and animal impact

We decided to try and use animal impact to determine whether the paddocks which had longer rest periods between grazing events had a greater amount (bulk) and increased diversity (type) of grasses in the paddock.

The way that we have gone about achieving this longer period of