



Barrabool Hills Landcare Newsletter

February 2019

Members of the Barrabool Hills community at the December end of year celebration.

barraboolhillslandcare@gmail.com

What's On.

14th, 18th, 21st February – Rabbit Baiting – You should have received your baiting form in the mail from Surf Coast Shire or with our last newsletter. If you require another copy please email us or check our website.

25th February – Next Barrabool Hills Landcare Group Executive Meeting

Wednesday 20th February – Film Night– “Ladies in Black”. Free event. Book early as limited seating available. More information in this newsletter.

Saturday in April Date to be Confirmed – Field day on farm water – how much do I need and how do I manage it



*Regeneration and survival of life in the Hills, through even the toughest conditions. Regrowth from a coppiced Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) tree that was thought to have died but sprouted in mid December on the left and a Southern brown tree frog (*Litoria ewingii*) which is currently residing near a water pump and looking very small next to a gum flower on the right.*

Printed by Sarah Henderson MP, Federal Member for Corangamite

“Ladies in Black”

Film Night Wednesday 20th February

Ric and Sheila Walters’ 7.30pm



Just a reminder that our annual Barrabool Hills Landcare group film night is fast approaching and there are still a few seats available.

The evening is always a great way to start the year and catch up with friends and neighbours. It is a free event, just need to bring a plate for supper.

Ric and Sheila Walters repurposed shearing shed cinema off Barrabool Road is wonderfully atmospheric and airconditioned...

“Adapted from the bestselling novel by Madeleine St John, Ladies in Black is an alluring and tender-hearted comedy drama about the lives of a group of department store employees in 1959 Sydney”.

It has had excellent reviews, so should be a great break from “rabbit baiting”!

Free Event, RSVP’s are essential as places fill fast. RSVP to Kaye Rodden nidgee@reachnet.com.au

Plants and surviving the long hot summer

Its mid-January and most of Australia is experiencing a heat wave with temperatures pushing beyond the mid-thirties. While we all look for some air-conditioned comfort, in exposed paddocks newly planted trees and shrubs are toughing out these scorching conditions.

It never ceases to amaze me just how hardy our native plants are. From autumn through to spring, tens of thousands are planted on farms and most survive the long hot summers. Even in a particularly dry hot summer, over 60% of plants will make it through and in an average summer over 90% survival is not uncommon.

But here comes the escape clause, the weed control has to be good. Good weed control is the only way of conserving soil moisture and if it is done well, plants can survive the longest hottest periods without rain.

What is good weed control?

A patch of bare earth 1 – 2 meters in diameter or 1 – 2 m wide bare strips is satisfactory, but timing, ripping and mulching also play their part. I recommend wider spots and strips if there are aggressive perennial grasses like phalaris on the planting site. A weed free patch around plants should be maintained for 12 months

Also, if browsing animals like kangaroo, wallaby, hare and rabbit are a threat, then spots are preferable because the remaining grass disguises the new plants. Strips become runways and camping areas where the native plants can be browsed at will.

Timing

Now that spring rains are less reliable, planting should be completed by the end of August in dry areas. Wet areas can be planted to end of September. This allows two months for plants to establish before the soil begins to dry.

Weed control should be complete by mid-winter to early spring, well before the rush of spring growth depletes soil moisture. This usually involves spraying with a knock down and a residual herbicide, though the same result can be achieved without chemicals

mulching with bales old straw. A third alternative is to mouldboard plough after the autumn break. This method buries the seed bank and provides weed control for up to two years.

Ripping

To rip or not to rip, that is the question? In the 'self-ripping' cracking clay soils ripping creates problems. The soil cracks wider along the rip lines and may expose plant roots.

On sloping, dry well drained loamy soils ripping is helpful because it traps and channels rainfall to the benefit of new plants. Ripping is usually done after the autumn break when the soil is moist but not wet. Shallow ripping to 300mm is adequate for this purpose. Deep ripping to fracture the subsoil is only necessary if there is a known clay pan that would prevent plant roots from penetrating into the permanently moist subsoil.

Surviving the long hot summers is something young plants have done for millennia. Providing the best growing environment with good weed control enhances their natural ability to survive and ensures that most of them thrive.

Stephen Murphy
Sustainable Biorich Landscapes
www.recreatingthecountry.com.au



An example of spot spraying around newly planted native plants. Please make sure you follow the relevant guidelines, safety procedures and abide by recommended withholding periods of pasture with sprays.

Rabbits know no boundaries!

Each year the Barrabool Hills Landcare group facilitates a rabbit baiting program for its community. We are just about to embark on the 2019 program, in fact orders for bait close on the 7th February (see our website for ordering details).

This program will only be truly effective if every landholder who has rabbits, participates. Rabbits are not discriminatory when it comes to scampering into a neighbour's property.

If you have some evidence of rabbits on your land, you have eyeballed them, seen rabbit scratchings, rabbit faeces, burrows or warrens, or if for some unknown reason your rose bushes are all trimmed to 50 cm from the ground, then you may have rabbits.

The baiting program runs over 7 days from 14th February until 21st February, scheduled to be at a time of year when there is little other green feed around (other than rose bushes!) The pindone-baited carrots need to be ingested in small quantities on multiple occasions to be effective (hence the three baiting dates)

If you would like some advice or have any questions about the program or more general ones about our Landcare group, please contact Kaye Rodden (0438317499). *Kaye Rodden*

- 400 litre spray unit trailer mounted
 - 2 Kidney tree buckets
 - 1 Potti Putki Tree planters
 - 2 Hamilton Tree planters
 - 1 60 litre motorbike mounted spray unit
 - 1 Rabbit Smoker (not for culinary purposes)
- Members are requested to return all equipment to Trevor promptly after use.
Contact Trevor Jones on 5265 6126 or 0407 009 855.

BHLG Xmas Meeting Report

To the Landcare community, the traditional wood-fired Aussie bar-b-que fulfils the same function as the office water-cooler for city folk: a physical environment for people to gather. There's also something about the fire, the odour of cooking food and the effect of the smoke which stimulates animated discussion, controversy, exaggeration and laughter. The old-timers had a word for it: yabber. On a beautiful Barrabool Hills December evening the annual BHLG Christmas BBQ got off to a sizzling start. The old-fashioned half 44-gallon drum with solid iron grill produced some fine tucker laced with oodles of yabber to feed the 30 hungry souls present.

President, Kaye Rodden welcomed all members and guests, including retiring Geelong Landcare Network Facilitator, Elissa Ashton-Smith, and guest speaker, Rowan Reid.

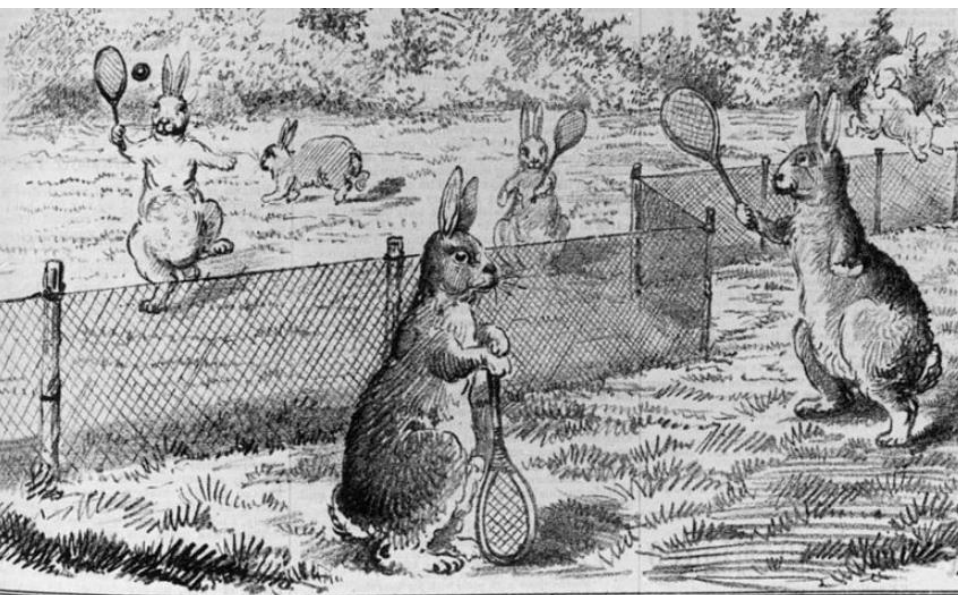
In his address, Rowan highlighted the possibilities of converting a well-managed tree crop into a cash bonanza. He pointed out that new home builders in Melbourne were keen to source wall veneer and furniture made of local timber from farmers who could relate the genesis of the wood. He also stressed that it was not always necessary to supply indigenous timber. Exotic varieties were perfectly acceptable provided they were fit for the purpose.

In a note of caution, he stressed that farmers required a sound knowledge-base to select the best species for growing in the Hills.

Rowan Reid is an academic, founder of the Otway Agroforestry Network and an

author. His latest book is "Heartwood: The Art and Science of Growing Trees for Conservation and Profit". For details on Rowan's contribution to agroforestry go to his website: www.agroforestry.net.au.

Brent Rodden



STEVENSON'S WIRE FENCE.

Mr. Stevenson, M.L.A., suggested that the Government should erect a wire fence along our New South Wales border in order to check the coming invasion of rabbits. The artist depicts the probable use the bunnies would make of the fence.

An amusing 1884 cartoon in response to a proposal to erect a rabbit-proof fence between New South Wales and Queensland. Source Wikipedia.

Equipment for loan to members

The following equipment is owned by the Barrabool Hills Landcare Group and is available for use by members:

Buying feed – need to know

When sourcing feed supplies there are a couple of key issues worth considering before securing a seemingly cheaper feed: feed testing and commodity declarations, so you know exactly what you are getting. This will ensure that the feed value is high enough, and hence give you value for money and peace of mind that it is safe to feed.



Consider getting your feed tested and checking that it's safe for your livestock.

1. Get the feed tested - Testing of feed sources for key nutrients is even more crucial when the costs are high, and the source is new. For example, in 2006–07, when canola hay was last cut widely and fed to stock, FeedTest values ranged from 4.1 to 13.1 in energy value as MJ ME/kg DM (megajoules of metabolisable energy per kilogram of dry matter), and protein ranged from 4% to 27.2% crude protein.

This represents a fourfold range in energy value and an even wider range for protein content. The lowest values represent a low-grade feed that would be unable to sustain stock, and the high end represents high-quality feeds similar to good grain. Even small ranges in quality can mean large cost differences.

There are other nutritional considerations, such as fibre and intake potential. For example, some fodders that are high in fibre or water can limit intake and the ability of stock to eat as much as they need to. The main feed components that can be tested are energy, protein, fibre and dry matter.

Energy - Because energy is the main requirement of livestock, knowing the metabolisable energy (ME) values of different feeds is critical to working out how much you need to feed and the best value (as cost of energy) to buy. A feed analysis report will report on ME, expressed either as MJ ME/kgDM or as megajoules per kilogram of dry matter

(MJ/kgDM). ME is the amount of energy in the feed that is available for sheep to use. It involves measurement of energy excreted in faeces and urine, and exhaled as methane.

Protein - Protein is measured as the crude protein (CP), as a percentage of dry matter. Protein contains nitrogen, and this is used to estimate the protein content of feeds. A portion of the nitrogen in feed is nonprotein nitrogen (nitrates, ammonia and urea); crude protein is a measure of both this and the feed protein (amino acids). Crude protein values give a good indication of whether a particular feed will satisfy the protein needs of an animal.

Fibre - Fibre is measured and reported as neutral detergent fibre (NDF) and acid detergent fibre (ADF) as a percentage of dry matter. NDF is a measure of all the fibre (the digestible and indigestible parts) and indicates how bulky the feed is. ADF is a measure of the proportion of feed that is indigestible to stock (mainly cellulose and lignin). Feeds with a high ADF are low in energy. If both NDF and ADF are reported and the ADF represents a high proportion of NDF, this means that most of the fibre content in the feed is indigestible to stock.

Dry matter - All measurements of energy and protein are made on a dry matter basis, so feeds of different moisture contents can be compared. Dry matter is the amount of feed left after all the water in the sample has been removed by oven drying. It is expressed as a percentage of the original sample. Knowing the dry matter percentage enables you to work out how much to feed to meet the energy requirements of the stock.

Other components of a feed analysis

Digestibility is provided on a feed analysis report as a percentage of dry matter – either DDM (digestible dry matter) or DMD (dry matter digestibility), depending on the company doing the analysis. It is the percentage of the dry matter actually digested by the animal. High-quality feeds will have a figure above 65%. Feeds below 55% are of poor quality – even if sheep are given free access, they will be unlikely to maintain their live weight if this feed is supplying all of the diet.

Digestibility of organic matter is expressed as a percentage of dry matter. It is a measure of the digestibility of the organic component of the feed. It takes into account the inorganic component (referred to as ash), such as sand, dirt and clay, that may be present in the sample.

Ash is reported as a percentage of dry matter. It is the inorganic material – sand, dirt and clay – present in the sample that is not used by the stock.

Fat is expressed as a percentage of dry matter and is a measure of the lipid content of the feed. If the diet of sheep is too high in fat (greater than 5%), intake will be reduced.

Water-soluble carbohydrate is reported as a percentage of dry matter. It is a measure of the total naturally occurring sugars in the feed. Sugars are a highly digestible source of energy for rumen bacteria and therefore sheep.

Note that not all companies test and report on the same components. Metabolisable energy, protein, NDF and dry matter are key components to have tested.

When sourcing feeds, ask for the feed analysis before you buy. If a test is not available, it may be possible to get a sample and send the test off yourself before deciding whether to buy. If you buy feed without a test, it is still worth taking a sample and getting a test done so that you can fine-tune your rations and assess whether all requirements are being met.

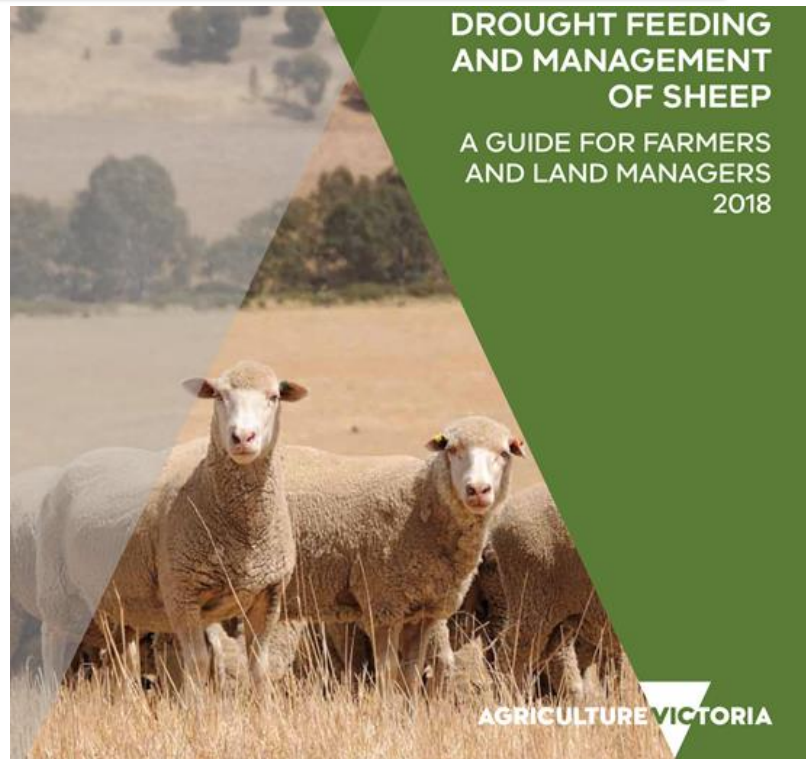
A number of companies (a local one listed below, others around the state on the website link) do feed tests and can provide follow-up advice if needed. Their websites will provide details about how to sample, costs involved, how to access sampling kits and payment methods: FEEDTEST®, Werribee
Phone: 1300 655 474 <https://www.feedtest.com.au>

2. Check that the feed is safe for livestock - When sourcing feeds, particularly new sources, or fodder from failed or harvested crops not originally intended for livestock, we recommend that you obtain a commodity vendor declaration form. This will provide some background about the feed source, including whether it has been sprayed or treated with a chemical that is still within a withholding period (WHP), export slaughter interval (ESI) or export animal feed interval (EAFI).

A [commodity vendor declaration](#) (hyperlink clickable in digital version) can be downloaded from the Meat & Livestock Australia website.

For more information

For feeding and managing sheep through droughts see: [Drought feeding and management of sheep guide](#) (hyperlink clickable in digital version).



This resource also includes information on stock containment and water supplies.

This article was originally published in Sheep Notes Spring 2018 by Agriculture Victoria. To sign up to this informative and useful newsletter follow this link <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/sheep/sheep-notes-newsletters>

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What bird is this?

The Vice President of the BHLG Jim Seager guessed the identity of the bird in the December BHLG newsletter correctly, well done Jim. The bird was a Yellow-faced honeyeater (*Lichenostomus chrysops*), it is found in open sclerophyll forests and feeds on flies, spiders, and beetles which its comparatively short-billed beak is thought to be adapted for as well as nectar and pollen from the flowers of Grevilleas and Banksias. While some yellow-faced honeyeaters are sedentary, hundreds of thousands migrate northwards between March and May to spend the winter in southern Queensland and return in July and August to breed in southern New South Wales and Victoria (Source Wikipedia).

This attractive little bird was slightly confused about it's identity in the Hills recently and was observed mingling with some introduced Spotted Turtle-doves, it's common name is quite contradictory to the amount of noise it makes, however it's diplomatic behaviour is consistent with it's name (see the digital newsletter for colour photo). Email the newsletter editor with your 'what bird is this?' answer, the first person to answer correctly will have their name published in the next newsletter.

Tim Harte

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Let your fellow members know what is happening in the Barrabool Hills. Contributions to the newsletter are welcomed. Send articles and photos to Tim Harte (*balletcadet@gmail.com*), deadline for next issue is 16/03/19

Members are able to advertise their Barrabool Hills business in the newsletter @ \$30 per issue (space allowing). Ads. are approximately 50 mm x 70 mm, and will be printed provided there is space. A special thanks goes to the Leigh family for distributing the newsletter.