

LAND TALK

Newsletter of the 'Centralian Land Management Association Inc.' (CLMA)

G'day all,

Well it's been a time of transition and turmoil for CLMA in terms of staffing and funding in the past few months. I returned from 2 months overseas at the end of July to fill in as coordinator for Andrea while she took six months to travel around Australia and enjoy being a newly wed. August saw me learning the ropes and getting out and about. I travelled across to Barcaldine via the Plenty to attend the Queensland Landcare Conference and Awards and to participate in the Channel Country Grazing Land Management technical meeting in Longreach. All was going well until a trip to the Birdsville Races at the start of September resulted in a fractured left foot which is still in plaster (it's a long story and you may have already heard a version so I won't disappoint you with the boring details!)

This came on top of fighting for CLMA coordinator funding past the end of the year. At this stage the coordinator will be funded for the first quarter of next year through the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT). Beyond that the coordinator funding will have to be sourced via projects such as weeds and soil conservation. This makes applying through the latest round of NHT funding applications vital.

I am now working from home on these applications and am job sharing the coordinator position with Adrian James until the end of the year.

Here's to a wet summer and successful home remedies for broken bones! Cheers, Jo.

MEAT PROFIT DAY TO BE HELD IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA IN 2006!

The inaugural meeting of the Central Australian Meat Profit Day Committee was held last week to begin planning for the Meat Profit Day that will be held next year. The committee is made up of producer representatives, NTCA, CLMA and DPIFM representatives. This will be the second Meat Profit Day in the region, the first one was held in 1995.

The Meat Profit Day will be an opportunity for producers throughout Central Australia to be provided with up to date research results and hear from keynote speakers from around the world on topics of relevance and benefit to them.

The Meat Profit Day is a concept of Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) and is used to deliver tailored information to meat producers throughout Australia. MLA provide sponsorship and support for the event and will work closely with the committee in ensuring the day is a success.

Dates for the Meat Profit Day are not yet confirmed but it will be in late September, or early October. The committee decided to hold the Meat Profit Day over 2 half-days instead of one full day, with a function and entertainment on the evening in between. The second day of the Meat Profit Day will be held at DPIFM's Old Man Plains Research Station and will coincide with the official opening of the Research Station.

Your input on the theme, format and topics for the event are sought to ensure that the event is of maximum benefit to producers throughout Central Australia. If you have any questions or have input please contact Ian McLean, 08 8951 8191 ian.mclean@nt.gov.au. The committee will next meet in December.

DICK AND ANN CADZOW WIN LANDCARE AWARD!

As outlined in the July edition of Land Talk, the CLMA nominated Dick and Ann for a NT Landcare Award. The winners were announced at the Landcare Awards dinner held in Katherine in September. Dick and Ann took out the Rural Press Primary Producer Award. The judges were impressed by the careful planning and execution of their landcare works and the Cadzow's commitment to sustainable grazing management. Several photo series included in the nomination demonstrated dramatic improvements in land condition and productivity.

The CLMA is thrilled that Dick and Ann have been recognised for their significant landcare efforts. As a result of their NT win, they are automatically entered in the National Landcare Awards to be held in Melbourne.

FREE MONEY FOR WATER INFRASTRUCTURE!

The Northern Territory Government is offering a Pastoral Water Enhancement Scheme (PWES) for commercial livestock producers in the NT to enhance land and water management. The scheme provides free advice and a financial rebate for new water supply and storage facilities. Grants are available for up to \$10,000 (on a dollar for dollar basis with the producer). Pastoralists can apply for the grant once each year.

The PWES is not available for works on irrigation water, fencing or equipment maintenance. The advice provided under the scheme can include the potential for locating water supplies, selection of bore sites, siting and construction of dams, and supervision of drilling.

For more information on the scheme and application process, contact Ian McLean, FarmBis NT on 8951 8191 or Ian.McLean@nt.gov.au

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS PROJECT UPDATE

Dee Walsh (08) 8953 4230

Welcome to Jim & Stacey Napier (Tanami Downs) who have joined the EMS project after a vacancy became available in August. Jim & Stacey have been testing "An EMS for Our Station" which is CLMA's computerised EMS program. Once the bugs have been ironed out, this program will be available for use by any members wishing to get involved in developing a simple EMS.

In other news, I'll be visiting all EMS stations between now and Christmas to see how people are going with their current work plans and to identify any opportunities for funding applications. I'll also be able to bring the quad to do some weed work and help people with their monitoring sites if they wish.

I've also been able to get us a spot in Outback Magazine for early next year. This is an awesome opportunity to showcase all the good environmental work that the industry is doing in Central Australia. So don't hide if you see me coming with the notebook and camera!

SOME NEW WARM BODIES IN THE OFFICE!

Jillian Fisher

At long last the Project Officer for the Central Australian Grazing Strategies Project (CAGSP) is on board and keen to meet the members and continue the project.

Jillian Fisher comes from a beef background, working in the Northern Australian pastoral industry for five years, stretching from the Victoria River region in the N.T. to the Kimberley and Pilbara regions of Western Australia. Her involvement included vertically integrated live export and breeder operations, supplementation programs and station-based pasture monitoring projects. Prior to her current role she gained an insight into the feedlot industry working on a 17,500 head feedlot in southern NSW producing cattle for the Woolworths and JapOx markets.

The project will develop best practice guidelines for spell grazing strategies in Central Australia to improve the economic viability and resource sustainability of this region's grazing industry. Jillian's enthusiastic personality and hands-on industry experience will be an asset to this challenging role. Members will be kept informed of the project's progress in further newsletters and station visits planned to develop case studies of alternative grazing strategies in this region.



Adrian James

In order to help take the heavy administrative pressure off Jo's injured foot, Adrian James has recently joined CLMA as Joint Interim Coordinator. Adrian has a Masters degree in Environmental Management and experience as an environmental assessor as well as in hands-on jobs like welding and concreting. When studying in Canberra during 2002/3 he raised guinea pigs on his 760 square meter property and experimented with rotational grazing and various methods of weed control. Like many larger-scale pastoral enterprises he struggled with stock losses due to feral dog attacks and depressed stock prices (only \$2 per head at the pet shop!)

"I'm really excited about working for the CLMA. With pastoral industries covering such a huge part of Australia, increasing economic and ecological sustainability is really important. CLMA's and its members' achievements have been impressive, and I hope to make a valuable contribution. Helping the environment in this part of the world is about keeping good land managers on the land. That's just as important as stopping erosion and saving biodiversity."



IS YOUR GARDEN FULL OF FERAL ANTS?

The Threatened Species Network is working with CSIRO to try to stop the spread of the African big headed ant in Alice Springs. The big headed ant is a huge nuisance in houses – it chews through grouting in tiles and pavers, eats electrical wiring, and infests food areas, carpets and irrigation systems.

It also displaces native insects, particularly other ant species, directly through aggression. As such it is a serious threat to biodiversity. This is the only feral ant species in the region, which makes protecting the existing diversity of ant species especially important.

Ants provide many ecological services which are often not immediately apparent, but are of great importance to the ecosystem as a whole. These include soil aeration, detritus breakdown, pollination and seed dispersal.

What to look for:

- They are a very small ant (minor workers approximately 2 mm long and major workers 3-4 mm long), which is smaller than the common black ant.
- Only around 1 in every 100 ants are major worker ants, and these have the distinctive large head. It is more common to see the minor worker ants, but they can be recognised by the shape of their heads which narrow abruptly behind the eyes
- They are light brown to dark reddish brown.
- They are active in the morning or late afternoon, and form slow moving trails
- They build 'super colonies' of nests with lots of entrances close together in moist places. They don't build elaborate mounds like many native ants. Nests are often in between pavers or cracks in concrete, or near dripper outlets.
- They become more active in the summer, and often move inside houses at this time.



(Not to scale)

A little history:

Big-headed ants have become widespread throughout the temperate and tropical zones of the world. It is thought that they first came to Australia accidentally in shipping cargo. But since their arrival they have spread very successfully in garden waste, potted plants, by road vehicles and translocation of machinery.

Although these feral ants are already established in other parts of the country, they have only been the Alice Springs region since the early 1990s. The first successful eradication of Big Headed ants was carried out in Kakadu National Park in 2002 by the CSIRO and Parks Australia. It is still possible to control the scale of infestation here, and the impact they might have in the region.

What you can do:

- Check all suspicious nests and get identifications of any suspect ants by bringing in a sample in a sealed container to Threatened Species Network;
- If you have big-headed ants identified, then consider eradication using Amdro (a specific bait for big-headed ants) either through a commercial pest control agency or by yourself;
- Reduce the amount of water you use on your garden. Get advice from Greening Australia or from local nurseries on low-water requirement native plants;
- Talk to your neighbours about big-headed ants and encourage them to monitor their backyard and treat any confirmed infestations.

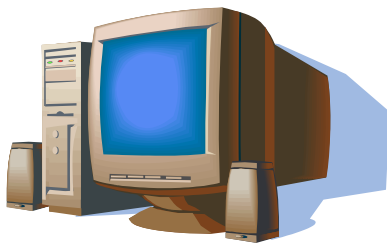
For more information, to report sightings or bring in a sample for identification please contact the BHA Project Officer: Ph. 8952 1541 or by emailing bigheadedants@yahoo.com.au Thankyou!

EMS PROGRAM NOW AVAILABLE

Are you interested in developing an EMS for your station?
Can you use a computer?

If so, CLMA has developed a CD program called "An EMS for Our Station". It leads you through four main steps and you end up with a basic EMS for your property. The CLMA staff can back you up if you need help and we can advise where to get property maps and other information.

If you would like to have a go at using "An EMS for Our Station", give Dee a call at CLMA.



HAVE YOUR SAY!

Have you got something you'd like to share with other people in the region relating to managing country, or maybe something you'd like to see in the next edition? LandTalk is inviting you to contribute a piece or article (to be published at discretion of the Editor, though cash bribes may be accepted).

Send in your ideas by email (clma@clma.com.au), fax (08 89523824) or post (PO Box 2534, Alice Springs) by the end of November.



WORKSHOPS DRAWING ROADMAP FOR DESERT SMART TOWN

By the time you read this some workshops will have been held in Alice Springs to create the "2005 Roadmap to a Desert Smart Town". These are held by the Centre for Sustainable Arid Towns and the Arid Lands Environment Centre, the final half-day workshop is on Sunday the 23rd.

Desert Smart is a new brand for actions that improve sustainability of water and energy use, waste management and building performance in Alice Springs. The aims are to improve business outcomes, increase community pride, reduce the cost of living and promote comfortable lifestyles.

To create the Roadmap, ideas are needed to form decide the:

- Destination (goals)
- Route Planning (how to get there)
- Roadblocks (challenges)
- Detours (seeing other interesting things along the way) and
- Rules of the Road (aspects of the process)

Local citizens and business people are invited to attend the Roadmap Workshop at Witchettys in the Araluen Centre, Larapinta Drive. More information is available on the Arid Lands Environment Centre website www.alec.org.au



CENTRALIAN LAND MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION
PO BOX 2534
ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Phone: 08 89534230
Fax: 08 89523824

SURFACE
MAIL

POSTAGE
PAID
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Print Post Approved
545270/00015

For general enquiries, & to contact Adrian clma@clma.com.au
For info about EMS, & to contact Dionne ems@clma.com.au
For enquiries about Grazing Land Management, & to contact Jo jo@aglingo.com
For info about the Central Australian Grazing Strategies Partnership, & to contact Jillian cagsp@clma.com.au

If you know of any new additions or other news – let us know!