

Rabbit Control via suites of incentives in the WA's Northern Agricultural Region (NAR)

Stanley Yokwe, Landcare Facilitator, NACC

The NAR is one of Australia's biodiversity hotspots which supports a large number of distinct, species-rich and endemic plant communities. These habitats provide critical ecological functions including shelter for wildlife, protection of wetlands, streams and estuaries as well as absorption of carbon dioxide and reduction of carbon emissions.

However, since European settlement the region's native habitat and vegetation has been declining as a result of grazing pressure of livestock and feral herbivores such as rabbits.

In the NAR, as elsewhere in Australia, rabbits are widespread and causing significant destruction to the region's high value biodiversity assets. The impact of rabbits on native plants includes damage to vegetation through ringbarking, grazing and browsing. Overgrazing by rabbits removes plant cover and contributes to soil erosion, degradation and denuding of native vegetation. Rabbits also compete with native fauna for food and habitat. In addition rabbits are known to cause considerable losses to agricultural and horticultural industries.

Through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country funding, the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (NACC) has funds available to assist farmers and land managers to control rabbit populations in 5 key habitat areas in the region in order to reduce pressure on endangered and critically endangered plants.

Incentives to be offered through this project will be based on integrated best practice rabbit control including; incentives for rabbit baiting; warren fumigation; warren ripping and rabbit-proof fencing. The logic behind this multi-faceted approach is that adopting only one rabbit control option is unlikely to provide long-term, cost-effective mitigation from rabbit damage in broad-acre situations over large areas. The use of one management option should be integrated with another means of control e.g. baiting stations will be used in combination with fencing off or warren fumigation or ripping. According to the Department of Agriculture and Food WA, integrated rabbit management control is the most cost-effective way to reduce rabbit populations, particularly over large areas (DAFWA, Farmnote No. 89/2001).

Incentives will be offered in accordance to set guidelines and minimum site criteria to ensure that significant public outcomes are achieved. Site selection will be guided by the correlation between the Caring for our Country national rabbit priority areas and known threatened and endangered species listed in The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999.

In addition to offering financial incentives, the project will also provide:

- training and information dissemination opportunities (through field days) to land managers and farmers, volunteers and NRM

professionals on the effective control of rabbit populations. The training will cover important management issues such as safe protocols for handling baits, fumigants, potential of land rehabilitation options and identification of relevant native species; and

- surveys to determine the effectiveness of control measures.

This project will be rolling for three years (starting January 2010) and will be strategically targeted to protect 24 endangered plant species in five local government authorities including Coorow, Gingin, Three Springs, Carnamah and Northampton.

Additional reading

Farrelly et al 2001. Options for rabbit control, Farmnote, Department of Agriculture, Government of WA, No. 89/2001.

For information regarding NACC's wind erosion incentives, contact your Local NRM or NACC's Jane Bradley, Incentive Program Manager at NACC office on 9964 9774 or 0428 649 775.

For more information on NACC rabbit control project, contact Robyn Nicolas, NACC's Biodiversity Project Coordinator at 9964 9774

To give feedback on this article contact Stanley Yokwe, NACC's Landcare Facilitator at the NACC office on 9964 9774 or email: lf@nacc.com.au



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Incentives available to help farmers reduce the risk of wind erosion in WA's Northern Agricultural Region (NAR)

Stanley Yokwe, Landcare Facilitator, NACC

Farmers in the northern agricultural region are being encouraged to apply for grants to help them ameliorate the effects of wind erosion in their paddocks.

Through the Australian Government Caring For Our Country funding, the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (NACC) has funds available (in a form of incentives) to assist farmers and land managers to increase the percentage of perennial land use in the NAR, & promote land use change that provides year round groundcover to those soils in the region that are most susceptible to wind erosion.

Incentives to be offered through NACC's wind erosion project include the establishment of perennial pastures and fodder shrubs, strategic plantings of oil mallees and establishment of tree species (native and exotic) as wind breaks. These management practices have been shown to reduce the wind erosion potential of susceptible soils. For example, the establishment of perennial pastures provides year round groundcover and protection from severe winds.

Incentives are offered on a first come first served basis. Sites will

be assessed against set guidelines and criteria to ensure that on-ground works funded through the project deliver landscape-scale change and value for money.

Funding is retrospective, with sites being inspected on completion of works to ensure compliance with works standards, prior to payment. Land managers undertaking on-ground works will also be offered 12 months membership to an appropriate industry group to enable them to access the latest technology and management information available that is relevant to their situation.

In addition to offering financial incentives, the project will also provide training and information dissemination opportunities to land managers involved in the project, whilst also including other community members with an interest in wind erosion and natural resource management. Training to be provided includes grazing management workshops to ensure land managers understand how best to manage their perennial pastures for production and environmental health; stubble retention management practices to protect

susceptible soils; integration of oil mallee and windbreak systems in existing farming systems, including the establishment and long term management of these tree crops; and revegetation of saline lands.

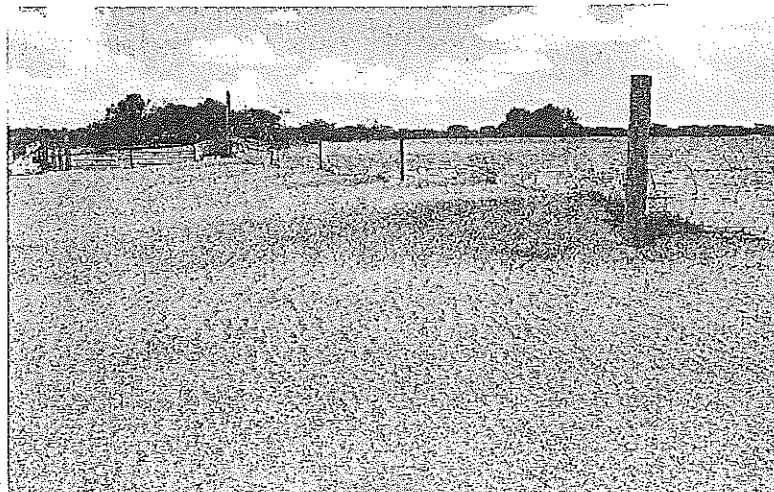


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For information regarding NACC's wind erosion incentives, contact your Local NRMO or NACC's Jane Bradley, Incentive Program Manager at NACC office on 9964 9774 or 0428 649 775.

For information about NACC's wind erosion project, contact Margi Weir, NACC's wind erosion project coordinator on 9921 5834 | Mob: 0448 939 040.

To give feedback on this article contact Stanley Yokwe, Landcare Facilitator at the NACC office on 9964 9774 or email: lf@nacc.com.au





Several Mid West farms were put into the spotlight recently on a sustainable farming bus tour coordinated by the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council

Innovative farmers in spotlight

SUSTAINABLE farming was thrust into the spotlight recently, with a bus tour around the Northern Agricultural region attracting about 20 farmers and industry representatives.

The tour was coordinated by the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council and stopped at farms in Kojarena, Pindar and Irwin.

NACC Landcare facilitator Stanley Yokwe said the tour group learned sustainable farming practices from innovative farmers.

Kojarena farmer Yvonne Marsden runs a property about 25km east of Geraldton and is working the land to minimise the impact of climate change.

"In 1995, I started adjusting my paddock fences and introduced contours to manage our surface water runoff," she said.

"It's important that we conserve the little runoff we get to keep moisture in the paddocks."

Pindar farmer Mike Kerkmans has planted about 500,000 oil mallee

trees on his farm, to provide another income source and to protect the land.

"Instead of relying on wheat crops, we can have trees on our farms, giving us another stream of income," he said.

"We have planted oil mallees every 300 feet within our wheat crops.

"We are working on a target of making about \$100 per hectare and we plan to have 10 to 15 per cent of our farm planted with oil mallee trees."

Irwin cattle farmer Craig Forsyth also fea-

tured in the tour, educating people about the benefits of strategic grazing.

"Eight years ago we made a decision to leave broad-acre cropping to concentrate on livestock, so we decided to move to a wholly grazing enterprise," he said.

"A good rotational grazing system is a more effective way of grazing paddocks than set stocking."

The tour was part of the Federal Government's Caring for Country program.

— Claire Tyrrell

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Fact 003

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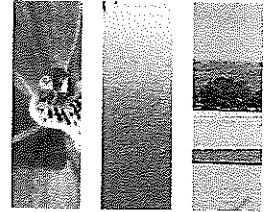
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*State and Territory Hospital Data, compiled by the Department of Health and Ageing. *GPs may charge a consultation fee.

Authorised by the Australian Government, Capital



Inspiring stories on sustainable farming to be showcased on free bus tour

Farmers and land managers are being urged to "get on board with NACC" for a day tour of several farms in the northern part of the region to showcase first hand practical experience in sustainable farming.

State Landcare Award Winner Mike Kerkmans will be one of three land managers who have volunteered to demonstrate innovative approaches to land use using broad acre oil mallee plantings.

The tour, to be held on April 1, has been organised by the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (NACC) Landcare Facilitator Stanley Yokwe and will visit farms near Geraldton, Pindar and Dongara. The presenters will include Yvonne Marsden, Mike Kerkmans and Craig Forsyth.

Mr Yokwe said that seeing how other people had approached land management and sustainability was a great way of developing new management systems.

"The tour will enable delegates to see a huge alley oil mallee enterprise; how one land manager has used biodiversity plantings; a well established broom bush plantation and subtropical grasses," he said. "Another very exciting visit will be to a highly successful grazing enterprise with wheel cell grazing systems in place featuring a combination of perennial grasses, annual pasture and tagasaste paddocks.

The tour starts at 8am and tour delegates will meet at the Ridge Cafe on the Geraldton - Mt Magnet Road (Opposite Geraldton-Greenough Shire), returning at 4:30pm. Catering will be provided.

He said that events such as the study tour gave land managers and farmers the chance to look at how different management techniques could be incorporated into their business planning.

"It's all part of developing a region-wide network of land managers who understand that sustainable farming can mean that our landscape remains productive into the future," he said. "NACC is very keen to work to build awareness of the need to conserve and protect for future sustainability."

NACC is funded by the Australian Government to deliver Caring for our Country targets in a range of natural resource management (NRM) areas including wind erosion, weeds, rabbit suppression and coastal engagement.

NACC has had an extensive influence in building awareness and in implementing on ground projects across the Northern Agricultural Region. Around 70 per cent of the NAR region is privately owned and NACC works with the managers of private land to support them in improving soil health and how to include these elements in their farm planning.

For further information about the Sustainable Farming Study Tour go to www.nacc.com.au, or contact Stanley Yokwe on 0428 649 775 or email lf@nacc.com.au.

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For further information contact Jackie Gill at NACC on 08 9964 9774

NACC is supported by the Australian Government through Caring for Our Country



Grower input welcomed on wind erosion strategy

THROUGH the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program, the Liebe Group is working closely with growers in developing innovative and improved management strategies to overcome the potential of wind erosion in areas east of the NAR.

Liebe's landcare project will be running for four years and the number of activities including on-farm demonstrations, workshops, events, field days and case studies to encourage growers to adopt improved land management practices in the region.

Wind erosion is a major land degradation issue in the cropping country of the NAR and is an ever-present hazard in most years because of extensive areas of sandy textured soils and variable rainfall. With the region experiencing five years of below average rainfall and three severe droughts during the last decade, the impact of wind erosion has been more severe than in previous years. There are numerous

reasons why wind erosion occurs and growers have many options to ensure their paddocks will be less severely affected by any future seasonal variability.

In the NAR, growers have always been at the forefront of driving innovation when it comes to overcoming on-farm issues and the Liebe Group are working directly with local growers to capture exactly how growers are adapting to different issues.

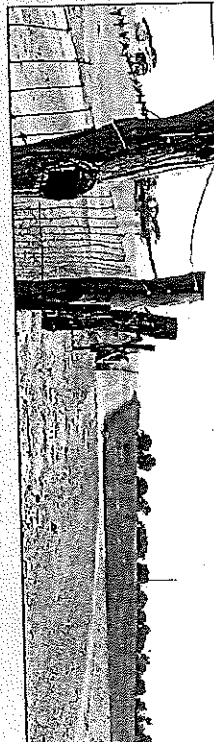
With the numerous different types of farming systems in the Liebe area, it has been important to capture the whole range of improved management strategies growers have been using to overcome wind erosion given different soil types, rainfall zones and enterprise mixes.

The aim of most wind erosion control strategies is to maintain or increase ground cover, whether by increasing plant growth through amelioration of low production soil zones; through growing an alternative crop or pasture that may pro-

vide more cover than traditional crops on a specific soil type; through managing stock differently so that overgrazing of paddocks doesn't occur; or by managing stubble in a strategic way so that a paddock is never left bare.

Some of the innovative ways growers have identified to control wind erosion have been developed around these basic principles and range from simple soil improvement techniques which produce better crops and therefore more ground cover, through to companion cropping, strip grazing, alley farming and even more of the blue sky technologies such as virtual fencing to prevent stock from reaching high risk erosion areas.

The Liebe Group will work with growers who have implemented or are about to implement some of these strategies. The group will follow their decision making and assess the impacts of their strategy over an extended period of time. With numerous different farming systems in the region, the manage-



ment strategy, or combination of strategies, will differ from property to property, even from paddock to paddock.

As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, this landcare project will present a range of different scale demonstrations which will be documented in grower case studies and include economic analyses.

This approach will allow growers to learn from growers, with the financial costs being weighed up as well as focusing on what strategies have the highest impact on the extent and severity of the erosion.

The project will be driven by a grower committee, who will identify the focus strategies and will help in developing the type of informa-

tion that is required to assist other growers in their decision making.

The Liebe group wind erosion project is complementing the NACC wind erosion project which offers incentives to farmers and land managers in the region to establish perennial pastures, fodder shrubs, strategic plantings of oil mallee and establishment of tree species as wind breaks.

For more information about the Liebe group wind erosion project contact Chris O'Callaghan at Liebe office on 9664 2030.

To give feedback on this article and/or for more information on NACC wind erosion incentives, contact Stanley Yokwe, Regional Landcare Facilitator at the NACC office on 9964 9774.

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Fighting wind erosion in WA's northern area

FARMERS in the northern regions are being encouraged to apply for grants to help them mitigate the effects of wind erosion.

Wind erosion is a serious threat to the resource base and agricultural industry in the Northern Agricultural Region (NAR), where about 80 per cent of the region soils have a sandy surface.

The prevailing winds in the region are a significant feature of the climate in the NAR and these winds can be particularly problematic during the summer and autumn. The wind erosion potential of these susceptible soils is high during this time, when the land is dry and devoid of vegetative cover.

Severe wind erosion events erode previous topsoil, resulting in a further decline in the health of agricultural land and the movement of nutrients across the landscape.

These events also have significant social impacts such as the mental well-being of the farming community. For example, when a farmer sees his/her paddocks topsoils disappearing across the horizon, it is a devastating sight.

It has been shown that the NAR is one of the first areas in Australia that will feel the impacts of climate change. The risk and impact of wind erosion in the NAR will continue to increase as the effects of climate change become more apparent.

Through the new Australian Government Farm For Our Country funding, the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (NACC) has funds available to assist farmers and land managers to increase the percent

age of perennial land use in the NAR and promote land use change that provides year-round groundcover to those soils in the region that are most susceptible to wind erosion. Between July 2009 and June 2012, NACC will offer incentives to encourage land managers to undertake these various challenges.

Incentives to be offered through this project include the establishment of perennial pastures and fodder shrubs, strategic plantings of oil mallee and establishment of fire species (native and exotic) as wind breaks.

These management practices have been shown to reduce the wind erosion potential of susceptible soils. For example, the establishment of perennial pastures provides year-round groundcover and protection from severe winds.

Incentives are offered on a first come first served basis. Sites will be assessed against set guidelines and criteria to ensure that on-ground works funded through the project deliver landscape-scale change and value for money.

Funding is contingent with sites being inspected on completion of works to ensure compliance with works standards, prior to payment.

Land managers undertaking on-ground works will also be offered 12 months membership to an appropriate industry group to enable them to access the latest technology and management information available that is relevant to their situation.

In addition to offering financial incentives, the project will also pro-



DA willly willly on a paddock affected by wind erosion.

vide training and information, dissemination, opportunities to land managers involved in the project, whilst also including other community members with an interest in wind erosion and natural resource management.

Training to be provided includes grazing management workshops to ensure land managers understand how

best to manage their perennial pastures for production and environmental health, stable retention management practices to protect susceptible soils, integration of oil mallee and windbreak systems in existing farming systems, including the establishment and long term management of these tree crops, and revegetation of saline lands.

For information regarding NACC's wind erosion incentives, contact your local NRM/O or NACC Incentive Program Manager, Jim Bradley on 9064 9774 or 0828 649 775. For information on the training to be provided, contact NACC Sustainable Land Use Program Leader Stanley Velske on 9986 8503 or 0425 579 543.