

Ag machinery road codes, acid soil projects **Around the regions**

PRIME FOCUS

Key points

- Tie-up with Grain Producers SA
- Soil pH mapping machines used
- Decision support tools developed

By ALICE LONG

THIS year, transporting agricultural machinery along public roads and cost-effective solutions for treating acid soils are two of the projects the Agricultural Bureau of SA is focusing on through its governing body, the Advisory Board of Agriculture.

Inadequacies in the 2006 Code of Practice for Oversize and Overmass Agricultural Machinery have raised concerns for members so the bureau has teamed up with Grain Producers SA to tackle the issue.

ABA member Karen Baines says the most reliable information comes from farmers on the ground and the Ag Bureau is encouraging farmers to talk to their local branch or regional representatives.

Members recently met with Transport Minister Stephen Mullighan and representatives from the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure.

"Some of the proposed changes to the code include permission for night travel, a review of the overhang lengths for augers, visibility distance requirements for escorting machinery on minor roads and bringing some sense into the equation for use of hazard lights as a warning light," Mrs Baines said.

"We are also seeking a review of the axel mass limits in the code as those in the current document had been calculated based on the trucking industry, not agricultural machinery."

The second project, innovative and cost-effective solutions for treating acid soils, is a new state-wide undertaking managed by the Ag Bureau and funded by the Australian Government's Department of Agriculture. It is being delivered by the Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA through Rural Solutions SA.

Andrew Harding, Rural Solutions SA, said this two-year program would help farmers assess the best ways to treat and prevent acid soils.

"More than 1.9 million hectares of land throughout South Australia is susceptible to the risk



SUPPORT TOOLS: Soil pH maps and decision support tools will allow farmers to have more confidence about where and when lime needs to be applied.



of soil acidification. This includes areas in the SE, Adelaide Hills, Kangaroo Island, Lower to Upper North, Lower Eyre Peninsula and some parts of Eastern Eyre Peninsula," he said.

When the soil becomes acidified then crop and pasture growth is affected. For optimum plant growth the soil pH should be at or above 5.5 (CaCl₂).

"Lime is the most effective and economical method to prevent and treat acidic soils," Mr Harding said.

"Previously, the amount of lime required for a paddock has been based on a single soil test and the lime applied at a uniform rate across the whole paddock. In recent years, a number of main lime sources have closed and the cost of lime and the freight to the farm has increased."

As part of this project, soil pH mapping machines are being tried to map the spatial variability of pH across paddocks. Using this information, pH zones can be determined, showing where and at what rate lime should be applied or those areas that do not require lime.

"To date, more than 1500 hectares have been mapped including areas in the Upper North, Mid North, Adelaide Hills

and South East," Mr Harding said.

"The mapping work is showing good results, especially on cropping paddocks and showing areas that do not require lime and where cost-savings can be made."

The project is also following up with lime suppliers to promote awareness of soil acidity and liming. As some of the major lime sources have closed, part of the project is also identifying and evaluating new lime sources throughout SA.

Decision support tools are being developed to work out the amount of lime farmers need to apply to bring the soil pH to an optimum level, and how often lime needed to be applied.

With pH maps and decision support tools, farmers can have greater confidence about where and when lime needs to be applied.

This year the project is working with farmer groups in the Upper North, Adelaide Hills and South East. Next year, it will work with farmer groups on the Eyre Peninsula and Kangaroo Island.

The Ag Bureau has a long and proud history of managing projects that benefit its members, SA's primary producers, across the state.

• **Details:** For more information on these projects or the Ag Bureau of SA, please contact Andrew Harding 0417 886 835 or Karen Baines 0421 677 860.

EPARF

The Minnipa Agricultural Centre annual field day on September 3 was opened by SARDI research chief Alan Tilbrook and attended by more than 150 people. Research results on national crop sequencing, Eyre Peninsula pratylenchus and rhizoctonia trials, fluid delivery systems with nutrition and fungicides were presented together with information on insect pests and clearfield technology. All enjoyed field inspections of the national variety wheat and barley trials, canola, sulla, vetch, medics and pulses. At the AGM, two new farmer members were elected to the board: Greg Scholz, Wudinna, and Dion Trezona, Streaky Bay. Matthew Dunn retired after contributing 9.5 years including two years as chairman, and Mark Fitzgerald, three years. Upper EP farmer sticky beak days have started.

• **Details:** www.minnipaagriculturalcentre.com.au or contact Linden Masters on 0401 122 172.

LEADA

LEADA has been hosting a pilot program with the Port Lincoln High School. The Year 9 geography curriculum includes discussion around food production and soils. Two bus trips were organised to Cummins and beyond. The first trip introduced students to the LEADA committee where they asked a range of questions about growing food. After this, they visited the New Horizons research site for a discussion about soil. The second trip took the students on a paddock-to-plate journey from silos and the delivery of grain to the mill where it was processed and finally, the bakery. LEADA hopes this pilot will become an annual event and extended to other schools in the region.

Upper North Farming Systems

The organisation's 2014 events are wrapping up. The annual field day, held on August 7, was a season highlight. A Frost Information Session was held in response to the extreme climatic conditions across the district. Despite the short notice, 71 attended. The group also held two crop walks. UNFS looks forward to seeing new and old members at the 2015 events, kicking off with a PA and NRM field day in February.

Yorke Peninsula Alkaline Soils Group

The group holds its annual Spring Crop Walk on Wednesday, September 24, at the Glenburnie trial site, 4 kilometres south-west of Minlaton, beginning at 9.30am. Pulse, canola and cereal NVT trials will be part of a walk-through and presentation by SARDI. Tony Craddock, Rural Directions, will speak on the identification and management of Beet Western Yellows Virus and its effect on canola crops and yield this season. Those attending will also have the chance to hear the latest information on snail management. The event is free for members, and costs \$50 for non-members.

• **Details:** Kristin McEvoy projects@alkalinesoils.com.au or 0400 283 015

Barossa Improved Grazing Group

The paddocks in the group's Pasture Challenge Project will be judged during an upcoming pasture walk. The challenge, funded by DEWNR, has involved the five local producer groups – BIGG's Angaston and Koonunga Ag Bureaus, Barossa Mid North Dairy Discussion Group, Mount Pleasant Beef Group and North Rhine Sheep Group – improving pastures throughout the 2014 growing season. The pasture walk will be held on Friday, September 19, from 12.30pm to 5pm, starting at Jamie Nietschke's pasture paddock at Ebenezer. BIGG and the Angaston Ag Bureau are also hosting the Eden Valley Bushfire-Looking Forward forum which aims to make landholders aware of the local agriculture and NRM project opportunities. The forum will be held on Thursday, October 2 at Keyneton Hall – 7pm for a sausage sizzle or steak sandwich followed by the forum at 7.30pm. Attendance for both events is free.

• **Details:** Rebecca Barr admin@biggroup.org.au or 0402 788 526

SPAA

There were 120 delegates at the 17th Precision Agriculture Symposium of Australasia on September 2 and 3 to learn about the latest developments in precision agriculture technologies, along with presentations from farmers demonstrating their experiences with PA tools. A recurring theme was the innovative use of precision agriculture from the soil up, applied over broadacre, stock and viticulture systems. The event featured international keynote speaker Lucas Haag, Kansas, United States, thanks to funding from the GRDC. Upcoming editions of *Precision Agriculture News* will feature articles exploring some of the presenter's findings in more detail.

Ag Excellence Alliance

Ag Excellence is running series two of its popular workshops on trial management and evaluation. They will be held in Adelaide on Monday, October 20, and Kadina on Tuesday, October 21.

• **Details:** Mandy Pearce 01418 805 670 or mandy@agex.org.au.

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