



WICCNews

WICC Newsletter February - March 2021



Bunuru

Second summer February - March

Season of adolescence - hottest part of the year





Photographer Katrina Hawley. Katrina@third.eye.photo

Farmers in focus



John and Barbara Dunnet

WICC recently caught up with John and Barbara Dunnet of Milyeanup Farm whom are 4th generation growers near the Scott River. With a focus on minimising chemicals and improving soil biology, the Dunnet's refer to themselves as 'biological farmers' and have developed their own brand "Black Point Beef."

Biological farming aims to work with the natural systems and processes to build optimal soil, plant and animal health whilst also incorporating the best of conventional farming methods to maintain production levels and quality.

WICC: Tell us about your farm?

Barbara: “Milyeanup”, is located at Scott River East in the Nannup Shire. The farm is approximately 1010 ha of which 200 ha is planted to Blue Gums. We have a core breeding herd of 500 cows and keep about 70 replacement heifers each year. The rest of the calves are weaned and will be fattened and turned off the following year. We aim for a dressed weight between 260kg and 350kg. We also buy in approx. 300-350 weaners during the year. We have a combination of dryland and centre pivot irrigation and our soils types are a combination of grey and loamy sands. We are in a 950mm rainfall zone about 3km from the South Coast. We have developed our own Brand Black Point beef because we have a belief that we have a quality product that consumers demanded and we have a story to tell.

WICC: There are a lot of terms out there to describe non- conventional farming such as Regen Ag, biological farming, etc. How do you describe what you do?

Barbara: We farm regeneratively with no chemicals, hormones, or pesticides in our system. Our values mean that we also avoid the use of acidic and chemical fertilisers wherever possible. We coat our fertiliser with humates to slow release of nutrients if granular and we coat any new pasture seeds with bugs and trace elements at seeding time.

WICC: What motivated you to take up biological farming?

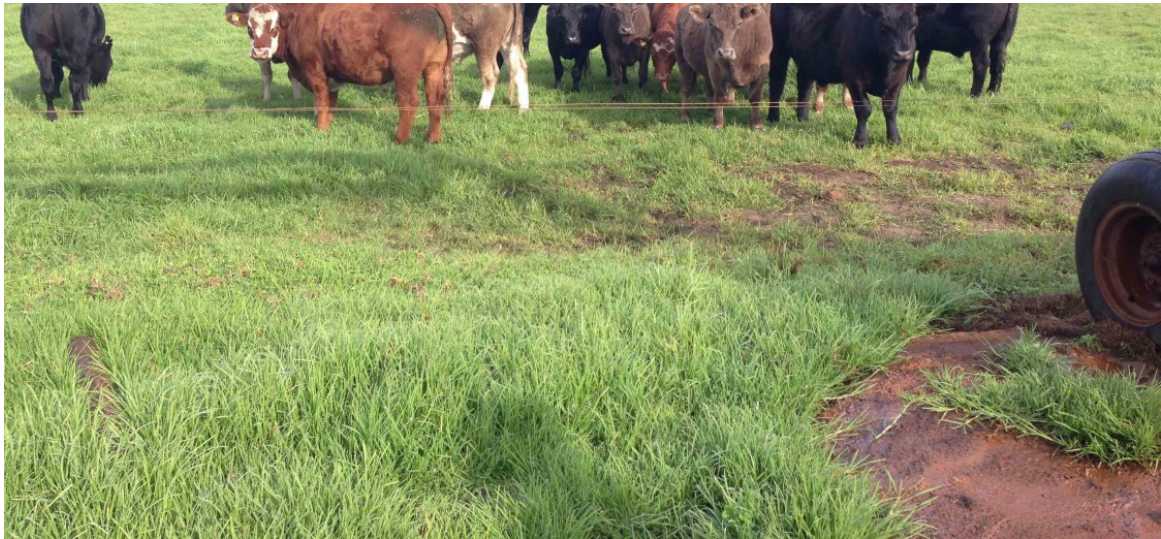
Barbara: We had a seed potato farmer who decided not to lease an irrigation site. We thought that as we were already beef producers, we could fatten cattle and maintain a continual supply of grassfed cattle off green grass all year round to help us to supply a market supply for our brand. In our first attempt we grew the grass, but the cattle would not fatten and had diahorrea which led to weight loss. Following extensive testing we found that there was too much molybdenum in the soil and iron in the water so the animals could not uptake the copper, cobalt and selenium that had been applied previously in a granular form. We learnt from this experience that animal health and soil health were of intrinsic value to our production system. Our philosophy was that we did not want to lose production, so whatever we did, we had to maintain or increase production. We decided to not use chemicals or pesticides or Hormonal Growth Promotants in our farming system, unless absolutely necessary (such as spraying out a paddock to reseed). We found it is harder to fatten beef cattle on grass year-round, than it is to produce milk, as the dairy cattle are supplemented in the dairy shed.

WICC: Most growers will want to see the science and bottom line to justify changes to their operation. What have you observed since you have gone down this path?

Barbara: We have developed our own beef brand in recognition that our beef is a premium product, and we have a story to tell. Chefs and customers alike want flavour and a story. We have been able to get a better price because we are meeting MSA eating quality specifications not having to meet abattoir penalty systems. We know that the water leaving our property is cleaner than the water entering our property due to the extensive monitoring that takes place to maintain our water license. We used consultants to help enrich our soil biodiversity and help us with trying to correct the trace mineral balance. We have gone down the path of trying to minimise the use of acid forms of fertiliser and have used other forms such as sulphate of potash instead of muriate of potash, black urea, application of humates through our irrigation systems, coating seeds with biology when we re-seeded paddocks and licks in the paddocks so that the animals could get the necessary trace minerals that we required. We also coated any granular fertiliser to slow down the release of phosphorous, potash etc. We had previously applied 2 tonnes of lime to the acre for ½ the property each year and raised the pH to an acceptable level. The pH seemed to be stuck at a certain point and further applications did not see any measurable difference. Our consultant recommended the application of Dolomite to add magnesium to calcium magnesium ration. This was like a silver bullet as we noticed animal health improvements in both condition and temperament and the pH also improved. We then moved into liquid fertilisers which added amino acids, the required trace minerals, and other required fertiliser directly onto the plant.

This year we had to put some phosphorous back into our system considering the amount that has been removed from the system over the last few years. The liquid products we use must be either premixed e.g., phosphorous, potash, copper, amino acids etc in one tank mix or easy to mix to limit the number of passes with the spray cart. We have also tried to get more diversity into our plant species rather than growing monocultures of ryegrass that requires persistent applications of nitrogen. Plants that have varying root depths use the nutrients at different depths and this also helps with minimising leaching.





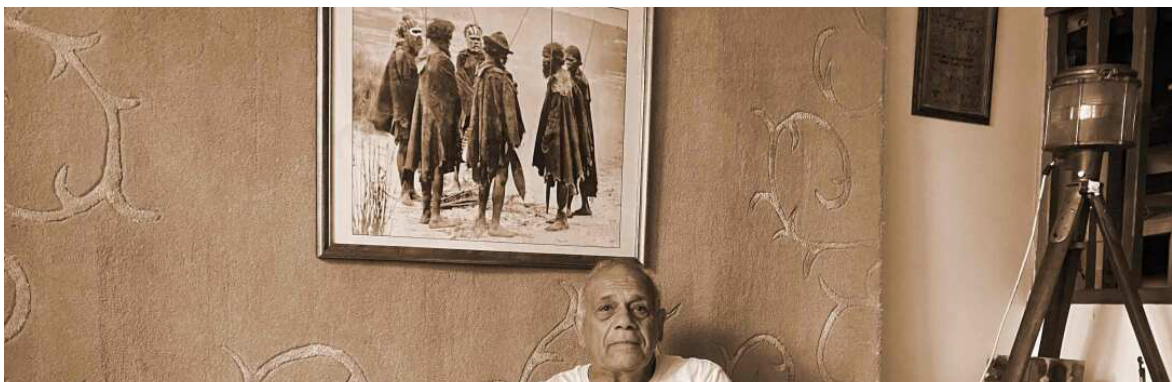
Milyeanup grass fed cattle

WICC: What advice would you give to growers looking to explore biological farming?

Barbara: Measure and record what is happening in your soils by observation, the shovel test and soil test. Think outside the box. Your soil is your greatest asset. Start with key objectives such as removing all chemicals and pesticides from your production system. Use rotational grazing. You can be more productive by having quality animals rather than just numbers. If you have a quality product with a story to tell there will always be a higher value market for you. Work collaboratively with other like minded growers.

Consumers are more aware of ethical food production methods that look after the soil, the environment and the animal and there are many emerging markets awaiting for producers who go down the regenerative path.

A message from our Elders





Menang Elder, Lester Coyne

"We need to start resting our soils,
its a banking system and we are not making any deposits."

WICC caught up with Menang Elder, Lester Coyne, to talk about sustainability, resolving conflicts and solving problems as a community...

WICC: Lester, can you tell us a little bit about your family background and your connection to this area?

Lester: I was born in Katanning and I lived there for about three years. Then we came to Albany. I'm the oldest of six. Two sisters, four brothers. We lived on an Aboriginal Reserve alongside the highway. I was very fortunate to go from high school straight into a job down at the golf links. I did my apprenticeship as a greens keeper. I loved it, probably the best job I've ever had in my life. I made five pounds, eight shillings a week. Didn't question it, I was a millionaire. Mum got three pounds and I had two pounds in those days. That was a lot of money. You could buy a hell of a lot of things. So I really felt very, very, very rich. I didn't realise at the time that the golf club captain, Harry, was taking money out of my pay each week. Years later Harry called me up to go to afternoon tea. So I rode my bicycle down and outside the window there was this magnificent FJ Holden with white sidewall tires. This car was glistening. The man who drove it was Jeff, a prominent Perth businessman. Harry and I knew him from the golf club. Jeff owned car lots. Jeff said, "Do you want a lift home? Will your bike fit in the boot?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Do you want to drive it?" I said, "Yeah". So, Jeff and Harry gave me the keys and didn't get in the car. They said, "It's yours, we've been saving all this money up." I couldn't believe it.

On sustainable land use...

We're just taking crop after crop, whether it's plants or whether it's animals or mineral sands, whatever. The chase for bigger and better profits at the expense of a poorer and poorer earth. It's not going to have a happy ending...It's a matter of people realizing that there are other ways they can do it. We need to start resting our soils. It's a banking system and we're not making deposits.

When I worked as a greens keeper at the golf club we had to put in 9 more holes for it to become an 18 hole golf course.... And we had to do that in beach sand right next to Middleton Beach. I said you can't grow anything in there. So my two mates that worked with me... we used to get ash from the laundry mat and starting adding it to the soil... One of the things that worked best was Rose Clover. So we'd plant that as well. The nodules, when you pull out the plant carefully had these incredible nitrogen nodules that enriched the sand. Albany golf links is now one of the finest courses in the world... all grown on beach sand. So I've had a very early introduction to what you can do to return goodness to the soil.

On how Noongars resolved issues

You would get 30 women in a room and there would be a card gambling game. Nobody would make eye contact. During these games they would resolve issues that were on their mind. That was the main purpose of the games. Maybe one person has an issue with someone's son coming to the house too often to see the daughter, or all manner of things... but every issue would be brought up. Everyone's sitting down so you had a disadvantage in regards to getting up and punching someone or offending someone. No one stopped the card game cause there was a big pile of money in the middle of the table, so they had to keep that going.

It is important to always do it (raising controversial issues) when you have a task to do along with the conversation.

On helping your neighbour...

Our families lived really close when we lived on the reserve. We had tents alongside one another within 10, 15 yards from one another. In the night, you might have heard a sound of someone in pain. We had no gain until we went across and helped them because the noise and the pain was all you could hear. Everyone came over and contributed to helping that person and we were all close enough to do that. We're not anymore. They've got a Commodore and a 67 inch flat screen TV now... and they're (strangely) happy as well. I don't know what the description is for people that are happy in a very sad society. I think we're living a false life in some cases.

To listen to the full interview click [HERE](#)

Donations in action!



a couple of cat traps purchased with recent tax deductible donations



baited cat trap on the Nullaki

Some Nullaki landowners have made quick use of the new DONATE button on the WICC website. The donators indicated they preferred their funds go to our Biodiversity Initiative. WICC used the funds to order 4 new custom made cat cages for the Nullaki Conservation Initiative.

[DONATE TODAY](#)

If you are a Nullaki resident, borrowing and maintaining a cat cage is not difficult - for a week, or year-round. We'll bring you the cage, show you how to bait and set it, and even come get the cat if you catch one. All cats are humanely disposed of by our friends at the Nullaki Vet.



WICC Feral Trapping Workshop
WICC will be holding a trapping workshop hosted by Gavern House of Alpha Pest Animal Solutions at the Youngs Siding Hall.
28TH FEBRUARY FROM 1 0AM - 11:30 AM

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[RSVP HERE](#)

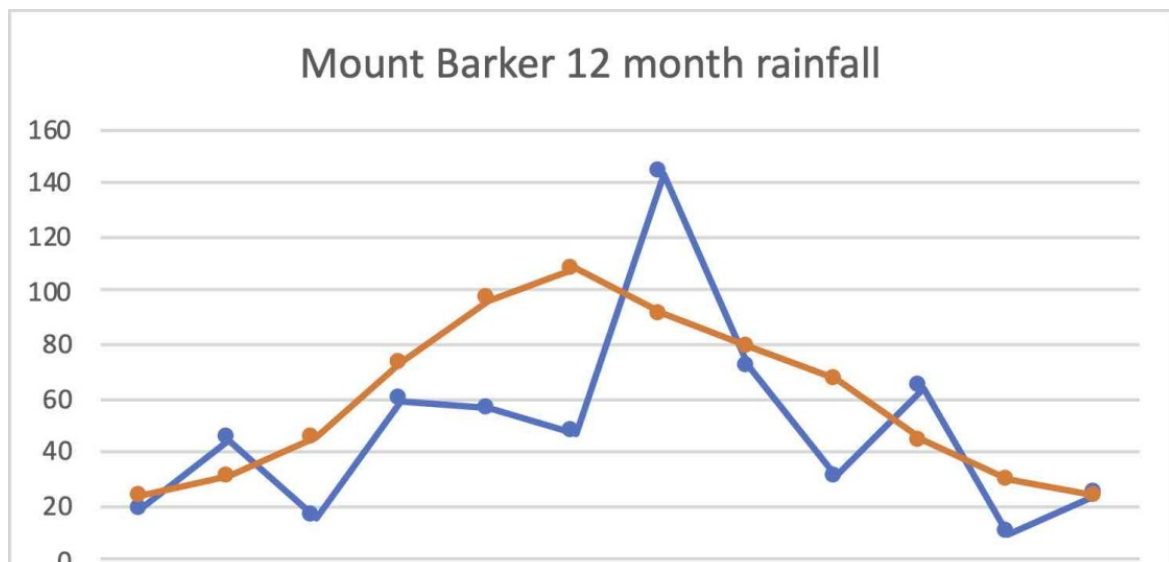
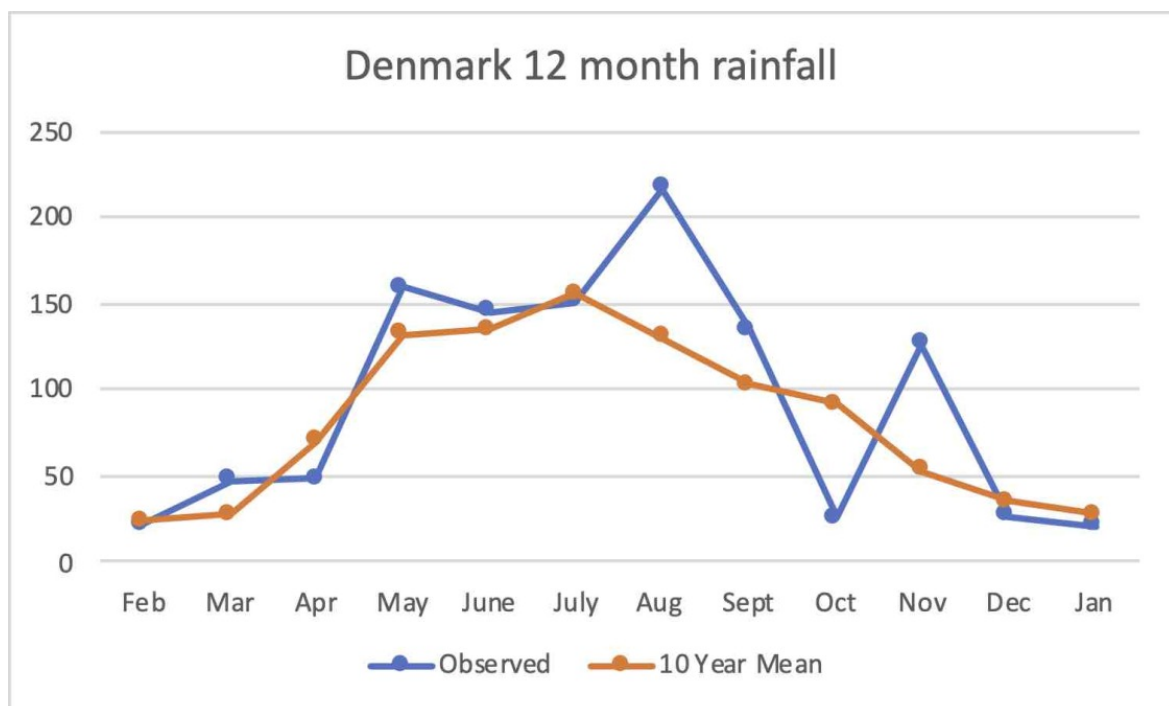
Inlet Update

The inlet has remained open during the hot dry summer which means it remains at sea level. Early closures of the inlet in the summer months lead to evaporation and a lowering of the inlet height. When this occurs it requires more autumn and winter rains to bring the inlet up to the height required to open it under the current bar opening protocol. The bar opening protocol is currently being reviewed by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and other key stakeholders.

[Click HERE](#) to see the latest inlet monitoring data

Rainfall Update

We have had a dry start to the summer with all observations between Denmark and Mt Barker below the long term average. BOM is predicting a big drenching from a low pressure system around the 6th to 9th of Feb and then a return to drier conditions. Our main climate driver, the Indian Ocean Dipole, is anticipated to trend more positive in March (which tends to bring wetter conditions), however these wetter conditions are unlikely to eventuate as the monsoon trough moves south.



Feb Mar Apr May June July Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec Jan

—●— Observed —●— 113 Year Mean

Whats on

WHOLE FARM MANAGEMENT

A grower group which brings together
profit and sustainability



WICC is seeking expressions of interest
from 20 farmers to join a grower group

The program includes **FREE** soil testing,
soil biology analysis, agronomic advice & more!



Stock Health



Dung Beetles



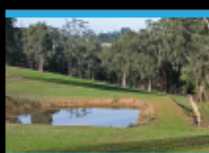
Paddock
Renovation



Soil Chemistry



Carbon Credits



Water
Management



Soil Biology



Chemicals
fact & fiction



Rotational
Grazing



WICC
WILSON INLET
CATCHMENT COMMITTEE

We have recruited experts from across Australia including vets, microbiologists, agronomists, hydrologists to advise our Grower Group. Express your interest **HERE** or phone Shaun Ossinger on 0401 291 457 as spaces are limited.



natural resource
management program



This program is supported by funding from the Western Australian Government's State NRM Program.

[Express your interest HERE](#)

Weeds in focus

It's that time of the year again...



Blackberries (*Rubus anglocandicans*, *R. fruticosus*, *R. laudatus*, *R. rugosus*, and *R. ulmifolius*)

Blackberry is a perennial and semi-deciduous prickly weed that most of us are familiar with, often forming dense thickets on or near waterways.

Begin control measures only if you have plans to return for at least three years in a row. It is recommended to spray during summer growth, or manually remove anytime during the growing season. Manual control can be achieved on small infestations, especially in natural bushland, and larger infestations along waterways where spraying is not permitted.

Metsulfuron plus Pulse is one of several spraying options. On larger infestations it can be used before the more expensive Grazon that has little effect on grasses. If you are using chemicals, use no more than recommended by the manufacturer (it won't make it any more effective). Surfactants (like Pulse) are harmful to our frogs. Good rule of thumb is "if you hear croaking don't use surfactants".

Goats have proved effective at control so long as in well secured enclosures.

Rusts have turned up and been experimented with in our region but their usefulness is seemingly dependent on specific seasonal weather conditions being met.

Contact WICC if you would like us to recommend a good chemical contractor.

Did you know?

..that Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee is now a **deductible gift recipient (DGR)**, we have shovel ready projects that need your support!

All donations of \$2 or more to WICC are tax deductible

DONATE

& SUPPORT OUR PROGRAMS

Your donation will help support these vital projects



Biodiversity Initiative

We work with landowners to restore and maintain the natural biodiversity in the catchment through invasive species controls,



Waterways Initiative

We implement work programs in coastal waterways to further establish native vegetation, minimise



Sustainable Agriculture Initiative

We source and distribute funds and expertise to assist landowners to implement environmen-