

**what's going down in cotton town.....**



Congrats to **Thomas Quigley** of Trangie who has been accepted into the "Future Cotton Leaders program" . Tom's project will look at initiating grower networks that will provide learning opportunities and communication throughout the season .

**Ben Egan** has also been earning his keep for the Macquarie by putting together a you tube clip for Art for Agriculture that shows us the journey of cotton grower over a year its pretty cool what these young guns can do . check it out at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDR8c3hzm3w>

**Trial Update**

Some of you may already know that all the RDO's were doing some N trials this year. The purpose of the trials were to ground truth what the researchers have been telling us for a few years now , which is that there is a point where there will not be a yield response to N. To do the trial we set out to measure what was in the soil, what was removed by the crop ( biomass cuts ) what was in the seed . We then went back and did soil tests to see what was left in the field. This information provides us with a bigger picture than just a N rate trial. The next newsletter will have all the results as well as some footage from the time lapse camera I had between the high and low

rate. Big thanks to Jake Hall of Auscott for putting up with me this season and hosting the trial.

**Cotton on to this .....**

*We recently took a trip to the research station at Narrabri ACRI, where me and two of my Northern counterparts stormed the offices of a few of the researchers to find out what has been the interesting outcomes in terms of their research from the last season. Alice Devlin looked into the planting date trials and reported the following*

**Time of Planting - Some Interesting Results By Alice Devlin Gwydir RDO**

On a recent trip to the research station in Narrabri we saw a trial that showed that the later planted cotton has been yielding markedly better than the earlier planted crop. Mike Bange (CSIRO) has been conducting time of planting experiments each season to generate differences in growth and development associated with temperature. I visited Mike's field at Myall Vale recently and the visual difference between the two treatments, planted about 3 weeks apart, was remarkable.

The first planting was mid October and the later one was in early November. The top 4 or 5 five nodes of the October crop had no bolls on them, whilst the crop planted in November had a full boll load to the top. Mike puts it down to the fact that the fruit retention on the cotton planted in November was much higher than that planted in October. The October planting had a fruit load when the highest temperatures hit in early January,



causing the stressed plant to shed this fruit and therefore was compensating later with new growth. However the November crop didn't have the same load and therefore could hold on to its fruit. Mike noted that in most of the seasons where he had planted this late there the maturity of the earlier sowings was always earlier.

In regards to the risks associated with planting later, Mike pointed out that Bollgard II varieties will generally hold on to their fruit better than non-Bollgard, so you can afford to plant a little later as the early crop growth develops rapidly in warmer conditions and there is no loss of the length of the flowering period.

"We have also seen that these moderately later plantings have lower micronaire and longer fibre as the bolls are developing in cooler conditions." In particular, Mike pointed out that this **isn't** the kind of theory that can be held across cooler cotton growing areas. It would be good to do some trials in the Macquarie in future.



Jane Caton (Agronomy Technical Officer CSIRO) stands between two different plantings the cotton on her left was sown three weeks later in early November.

## Word from the Consultants.....

Dave Klaare has kindly volunteered to be first cab of the rank. **When asked what was the biggest challenge he saw this season**, he has a clear hands down winner which was "Ground Prep". The flow on effects from not getting this right will sting a grower all season long. It starts with the first irrigation and then impact things such as Nitrogen ect.

The disease issues have a bigger impact on the hills with poor seed to soil contact. Dave Klaare is a strong believer in "Pull up the beds early and let winter do its thing".

A good overview of what constitutes a good seed bed can be found in soilpak.  
<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/resources/soils/guides/soilpak/cotton>

Growers need to be realistic about this especially in a tight water year, there a few easy ways to make sure you giving the cotton the best start. Dr Pat Hulme of Sustainable soils has done these guidelines for seedbed preparation for irrigated cotton.

1. Inspect the soil and **make a plan** as to how to get to the desired seedbed condition at planting time. Consider the tillage operations as a system or package rather than operations in isolation. Soil properties and typical weather are important parts of the plan. The plan should list each tillage and fertilizing operation and when it should occur – give or take a bit to allow for the weather.

2. **Start early**, preferably when the soil is moist rather than wet or dry, but start.
3. Form beds with desired volume before rain starts. You can't control when the rain comes, so refer to the previous guideline.
4. Inspect the soil behind the machine during each operation. The aim is to incrementally form a level, consolidated bed with a relatively fine tilth in the plant line. Change machine settings or machine if the result is not satisfactory. Modify the plan if these changes don't work.
5. Generally allow either a month or a wetting and drying event or some frosts between tillage passes after the beds have been formed. This gives natural forces time to help break down clods between the passes.

### **Round the traps.....**

"Big ups" to the Macquarie cotton growers association for volunteering to man the BBQ at the Warren Show, it was a great day and the show committee were very grateful for not having to staff this for the day.



Jed Egan and Mal McKay on duty at the Warren show.

### **Macquarie Valley trivia.....**

I know your all a competitive bunch so I have come up with a plan for some trivia questions ,each month I will pick a old trial booklet and ask a few questions from it. The winners and the answers will be published in the next edition and ill probably try and drum up a prize as well. I encourage you to get out the old trial books as the issues back then are not that different to what we face today.

1. What was the most preferred variety in the 97 -98 season?
2. Name two of the growers who were listed in the review of high yielding fields?
3. What was the highest total N rate used by one of these growers?
4. What was a lepton test used for?
5. What was different about a planting method Stu Crawford tried that year?
6. According to the trials what was the ideal plant stand for that season?

Email your answers and

### **Check this out .....**

#### **Wild radish song**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7Kv5tl2rK0>

#### **What's going down with the weather?**

Our resident cotton info team weather Guru has given me a long term update for our Valley.

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Diverging fundamentals between the SOI and Pacific Ocean sea surface temperatures recently have thrown the well-publicised 2014 El Niño event into doubt. However, global and domestic forecasting models are aligned on reduced winter rainfall and above average winter temperatures which will put pressure on stored soil moisture in fallows in the coming months. On a more optimistic note, atmospheric indicators are generally well placed and the Tasman Sea is unusually warm which may assist in convective moisture on fronts that come through. Looking into the spring, provided the El Niño aborts and the SOI can remain in positive territory there is potential for favourable summer crop planting conditions. The biggest concern is the forecast increase in maximum temperatures which are generally more accurate than rainfall guidance. Keep an eye on the fortnightly climate roundup in the cotton info e-newsletter.

### What's coming up.....

- CSD Management Info tours are coming up in Narromine on the 25th of June at the Narromine RSL 5.00pm and in Warren Tuesday the 1st of July at the RSL @ 11.00 am
- Bollguard III RMS info session on the 22nd July @ Warren RSL
- Cotton Conference @ the gold coast 3rd to the 6th of August

I am also looking to do a few soil pit days before next season, if you keen for this to happen at your farm let me know and can start the ball rolling.

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