

Managing sheep and kangaroos

Local land managers and the community will benefit from a recent Fowlers Gap information meeting.

After five years of research at Fowlers Gap, scientist Adam Munn presented his findings on the impacts of native, domestic and feral grazing at a community meeting.

The event was successful with about 20 people present and it is hoped it will be the first of many at the research station, which is located 110kms north of the city on the Silver City Highway.

Mr Munn has spent the past five years studying the grazing patterns of kangaroos and sheep in an effort to understand the pressure of each plant species.

Mr Munn was eager to engage locals in his research and create interaction between the community and scientists.

"In the past, communication channels between scientists and the community have been more open. We want to show the community that we still have a presence in the area."

One of Mr Munn's principle projects sought



* Large grazing plots have been established around Fowlers Gap to measure their impacts. Photo: Gemma Deavin.

to establish large-scale grazing plots so that different grazing scenarios could be examined, particularly in light of mixed-grazed systems.

"When we compared sheep and kangaroos, both in a large enclosure and out in the free range environment, we found that contrary to previous estimates, which is that one kangaroo equals 70 percent of a sheep, one kangaroo really equals about 30 or 40 percent of a sheep," Mr Munn said.

The figures are based on the animal's energy

use and food and water intake.

"On average, the sheep on the salt bush diet were drinking about 12 litres of water a day and kangaroos about one and a half," he said.

The goal was not to replace sheep with kangaroos, according to Mr Munn, but to learn to manage the two together.

"At the very least, we're aiming to gather information necessary for people to make informed decisions about how they run their properties," he said.

The event also saw a

discussion of issues such as fencing, the place of kangaroos on the land and the future of the research.

"The idea is to keep going, really push it into the next level and look at species interaction on a large scale," Mr Munn said.

Dr Keith Leggett, director of University of NSW Fowlers Gap Arid Zone Research Station, said the community meeting was "a good start".

"The fact that we had a meeting and people showed up was good.

What we've got to do is make the station more relevant to pastoralists," Dr Leggett said.

Man in custody on robbery charge

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A man was subsequently arrested by police and was remanded in custody at a bail court sitting yesterday morning.

He will appear on the charges at a Local Court sitting next week.

Police were yesterday planning an attempt to reach a family of four stranded since Thursday on the Wilcannia-Bourke road.

The family's sedan became bogged about 40kms north of Wilcannia after they

apparently ignored warnings about not driving on closed roads.

Police said yesterday there would be an attempt to reach them by road after they had declined offers to fly them out via helicopter, which they would have to pay for.

The bogged vehicle is only about a 40-minute walk from the nearest homestead, but they have elected to remain with their vehicle.

Motorists who use closed roads could face fines of \$1,000 per wheel.

SRC conference

Two local high school students will travel to Sydney next week to attend the 2010 State Student Representative Council (SRC) Conference.

Willyama High School's Hayden Zammit and Danielle King will be among a group of 13 students from the western region attending the four-day conference which starts on Tuesday in Sydney.

Western NSW Regional Director of the Department of Education and Training, Carole McDiarmid said the students will join 130 other secondary school leaders across the state at the conference.

"The SRC Conference provides an important

opportunity for students to strengthen their leadership skills and provides an opportunity for them to take what they have learnt and apply it at their school," she said.

The conference theme, Accept, Engage, Time for Change encourages students to promote acceptance and respect, build school pride, and to become involved in educational decision-making processes.

"The conference is a true demonstration of student leadership in action, with the 20 student members of the Conference Action Team mentoring and leading participants through the conference, welcoming guests and assisting in workshops," Ms McDiarmid said.

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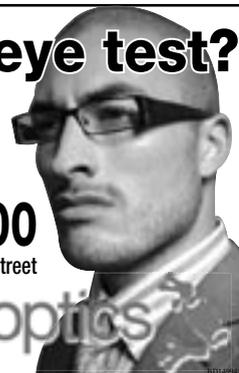
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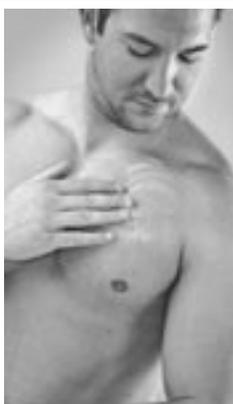
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