

The Grower's Word

From Mick Cudmore

FARM REPORT

The sorghum is the same as most, half dead and I'm currently going through the process of deciding whether to bale, silage or keep for grain – if I keep for grain I will then have to rogue all the sorghum as we still have scattered sudan grass in our paddocks thanks to Pacific Seeds from years ago. I'm still amazed how tough our sorghum is after receiving only 1 mm of rain since sowing. The irrigated sorghum looks good, although not as good as I would have liked.

The cattle are still in good order, I was understocked before the dry so I am now tossing up whether to buy some more or would that be adding another headache.

There are pigs everywhere; it reminds me of a place called 'Murderduke' west of Geelong near Whilltessa which we saw on an AgVance tour when 9/11 happened. We were wondering whether we could farm pigs like they did and I think I'm doing it now although mine are all feral.

I'm managing Jake Corner's farms where the irrigated cotton is looking good and we have been lucky to avoid the spray drift experienced by some. The dryland sorghum is struggling and the irrigated sorghum is just holding on due to limited water.

I seem to be busier than ever due to bureaucrats, politicians, Graincorp theft due to overweights, OHS and all the other businesses who think we should do their paperwork for them.

FAMILY UPDATE

Our eldest daughter Alice has finished school and is heading off for a gap year as a governess on CPC's Argyle Downs, 120kms south of Kununurra between Lake Argyle and the WA/NT border. I'm driving her up there on a father/daughter bonding road trip, she will turn 18 during the trip and sitting in an outback pub with just her father is not how she pictured celebrating her first legal drink! An AgVance tour went near there so those on that will know what an adventure she will have.

George is going into year 11 at Quirindi High School and is about to be taller than me. Loves fishing in the Mooki and enjoys playing basketball with his old man on Monday nights. Some of you would have seen him doing work experience at Pursehouse Rural at the end of last term which he really enjoyed and has led to some Saturday morning work. Archie is going into 6th class at Quirindi Public School and is also a very keen basketballer. Both boys play in the Wednesday night comp in Tamworth and the Quirindi rep teams which means lots of miles travelling to carnivals.

FARMERS AND STRESS

My social worker wife is always trying to get me to read various articles on various subjects and this one I did find interesting and important. With the current climate it is a good time to highlight the stress of farming and the importance of mental health wellbeing in the rural community

Below is an extract from a report by the National Centre for Farmer Health on rural issues and cop-



ing with stress. They identified stress is an ongoing issue for farmers, farming families, businesspeople and others living and working in rural areas. Hardships such as financial strain, social isolation and long hours can lead to stress, relationship breakdown, farm accidents and suicide. Studies show that farming communities in Australia experience mental health problems at twice the rate of the general population.

Most people experience work-related stress, no matter what their occupation. However, farming families can experience higher levels of work-related stress and respond in different ways to other people.

The report highlights that farmers face a unique set of stressors, because:

- Most farmers could never imagine doing anything else for a living, since farming is part of their identity.
- The farm is not only the workplace, but the home too.
- The welfare of the family depends directly on the fortunes of the farm.
- Family tradition is strong, since the farm may have been in the family for generations or is something the family has aspired to have.
- The farm may be the only real investment the family has and the sole legacy for the children.
- Selling the farm would feel like a betrayal of past and future generations.

People who farm the land tend to pride themselves on self-sufficiency and independence, so they can find asking for help difficult.

Those who are involved in family farms also face difficulties associated with succession planning and health concerns of ageing parents.

One of the keys to alleviating stress is to talk about your worries with someone, doesn't have to be a professional, just having a quiet beer with mates in the back shed can be enough. Let's follow the initiative of '**R U OK? Day**', the national day of action held annually in September to remind people to regularly check in with family, friends and colleagues throughout the year to ask 'are you ok?' They say you don't have to be an expert to support someone going through a tough time; you just need to be able to listen to their concerns without judgment and take the time to follow up with them.

Finally, I would like to thank Kirrily for all the work she has done, she has been a tremendous asset for the members of AgVance and we appreciated her knowledge and effort.