

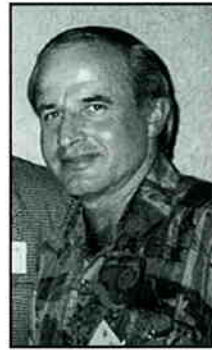
ExtensionNet

Vol. 1 NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALASIA-PACIFIC EXTENSION NETWORK No. 3

AS I sit down to write this, my third Chairman's letter to you, I am struck by several key thoughts.

- This is the first newsletter sent directly to the 454 of you who have replied signifying that you believe in what we are trying to do, and want to be involved in APEN in some way.
- What we are aiming to do for ourselves is what we are normally trying to do for our clients; that is, improve the way we work and the outcomes that are possible. We want to effect change in the extension profession and in the way the world perceives us. If we can see ourselves in this context, then it seems to me to make our tasks clearer. This is an area that we are supposed to be knowledgeable about. Can we change the change agent?
- This is the make or break time for APEN when we must now concentrate on forming the branches out in the regions of Australia. Peter Van Beek is working hard on a draft constitution that will be out with the interim regional management groups by the time you have received this newsletter. You can get a copy from them. I will be following up these groups to get feedback about how you are forming up

By
**TERRY
MAKIN**
*Chairman, Interim
Steering Committee,
APEN.*



APEN is for anybody involved and interested in this process. The broader its base, the more effective APEN will be. Extension is about knowledge and learning. It is fundamental to the development of rural Australia. The principles and theory involved in the processes of change are just as critical to improving an Aboriginal health program and the conservation of our soil and water quality, as they are to improving an agricultural production system. I believe that by sharing our experiences, knowledge and research from our various programs through our network we can strengthen all of our programs.

Let's make it happen

and what else we need to be doing to ensure the successful gestation of our new baby.

What is extension?

WE are getting feedback that this is an "Aggies" organisation. Some people are concerned that we follow a narrow and old fashioned view of extension. It is a very strong view of the steering committee and the interim core working group that extension is seen in the broadest context: as facilitators of change in rural Australia. (We cannot think of a term that encompasses all of these things better than extension - nor has anybody else).

We want to create a learning organisation for our members that is based on fulfilling our needs. We all need to be involved to ensure that we have an input in the directions APEN takes. Like any good extension program, individuals need to be involved in the planning process to have ownership.

I want to thank the Victorians who provided much of the material for this newsletter. It is heartening to see the increased emphasis that their department is giving to extension and the focus of their direction. This direction fits closely with the findings of APEN's December planning workshop and Peter Van Beek's article on the new extension in our first newsletter.

Breaking new ground in landcare extension

AGROUP of farmers in south west Victoria has broken new ground in landcare extension by developing and running an ambitious program which is solving land degradation and lifting farm productivity.

The early success of the five-year Woody Yaloak Catchment Project has been driven by farmer enthusiasm, community involvement, corporate sponsorship and a return to one-to-one extension.

The project is unique in Victoria because it represents the first time:

- Land degradation has been tackled over an entire catchment;
- A landcare project has attracted a major corporate sponsor;
- A landcare extension program has been developed and run by local farmers.

The catchment

The Woody Yaloak Catchment Project covers the 12,000ha along the Woody Yaloak



Rob Velthuis from DuPont with Linton farmer Tim Cooke at a weed control information night.

River which flows from Ballarat to Cressy.

The area has 150 farmers, six active landcare groups and produces wool, livestock and crops worth more than \$20 million a year.

The Catchment's land degradation problems include rising salinity and silt levels in

the Woody Yaloak River; gully, stream and tunnel erosion; rabbits; and weeds such as furze and spiny rush.

Management plan

In 1992, farmers in the region realised they needed a coordinated approach to tackling land degradation.

With support from the Victorian Farmers Federation, Greening Australia and Department of Agriculture, a committee headed by Pittong farmer Kevin Knight spent a year developing a detailed plan for the area under the slogan "productive catchment management".

Their approach to solving land degradation, while improving farm productivity, centred on rabbit eradication, tree planting, establishing and maintaining deep rooted perennial pastures and wide community involvement.

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THE recent release by the Department of Agriculture of its report on the implementation of the Field Based Services Review, heralds a new commitment to agricultural extension in Victoria.

Plans are in place to lift the performance of extension in the Department and to focus more carefully on high impact projects that will contribute to the economic and sustainable development of Victoria's agricultural industries.

Key features of the Department's new approach to extension are:

- Emphasis on a project approach aimed at the economic development of agricultural industries and overcoming land and water degradation problems.
- Commitment to continued funding of extension projects largely from Government and industry sources, rather than by fee-for-service.
- Growth in extension programs to be funded largely from non-Government sources.
- Focus primarily on projects that are mostly of public benefit.
- Close working relationship with farmers and other extension providers. Farmers are to "own" the extension projects.
- Industry development projects to be large and mostly delivered statewide.
- Projects aimed at overcoming land and water degradation to be regionally-focused with strong involvement by local community groups.
- Commitment to ongoing employment of a large group of senior, experienced extension leaders covering the major agricultural industries and country locations.
- Back-up by a large pool of other extension staff.

New life for extension in Victorian agriculture

By
MICHAEL TAYLOR
*Secretary
Department of
Agriculture, Victoria*



- Commitment to upgrading the skills of extension staff through appropriate post graduate training and extension methodology research.
- Ongoing annual cadetship program for undergraduates in Agricultural and Veterinary Science.

- Annual recruitment of new graduates to enter a two year in-service training program and progression to extension and other positions.
- Contracting out of parts of extension projects to the private sector (e.g. flood disaster situation).
- Integration of all DAV extension with that of other providers through the Property Management Planning framework.
- Appointment of a senior manager to oversee the extension functions across the Department.

These features of our new approach to extension should ensure substantial improvements in the performance and achievements of our extension projects. Recognition of this will be indicated by an increased rate of adoption of new worthwhile technology in Victoria and increased financial support for extension projects.

The appointment of Bruce Muir (Regional Manager South West Region) to oversee the extension function in the Department is an indication of our commitment to extension and to an ongoing evolution of the function. This role parallels that of the Chief Scientist for research functions.

Breaking new ground in landcare extension

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"The action plan and annual targets took nearly 12 months to develop but reflect how we want to solve our problems," Kevin said.

"We are encouraging the productive options to control land degradation - it's obviously what farmers want."

Funding

The plan was the basis for attracting funding and the corporate sponsorship of Alcoa which gave \$145,000 in 1993 and \$85,000 in 1994 for use in an incentive program for pasture sowing, tree planting, rabbit eradication and bulldozer work.

Other assistance and financial support has come from National Landcare Program, Greening Australia and the Departments of Conservation and Natural Resources, and Agriculture, two local Shires, merchandise agents, fertiliser, soil testing and chemical companies.

The committee also levies farmers in the project to employ two part-time extension officers who provide advice, coordinate the rabbit eradication program, hold information sessions and run field days.

The first year's results are testimony to the farmer-led approach to extension according to Kevin.

Results

"More than 60 farmers joined the project in 1993 and sowed 1540ha of perennial pasture, planted 25,000 trees, established 25km of direct tree seeding and significantly reduced rabbits throughout the catchment," he said.

"Alcoa's support lets us provide some financial assistance so farmers can have a go and experiment with new techniques with reduced financial risk."

But money was not seen as the sole reason for farmers being reluctant to sow pasture, plant trees and control rabbits.

"One-to-one extension advice is essential so new ways of sowing pasture and planting trees can be discussed in the paddock," Kevin said.

"Our approach relies on 'local politics' and wide community involvement to encourage education, participation and build confidence. It gives farmers the opportunity to exchange ideas and see each other's achievements through field days, information sessions, technical notes and a local newsletter."

For more information contact Cam Nicholson, Woody Yaloak Project Officer on 052 523 8600.

ExtensionNet

This newsletter is produced at the request of participants of the Australia-Pacific Extension Conference held at Surfers Paradise in October 1993. It is the official newsletter of the AUSTRALASIA-PACIFIC EXTENSION NETWORK.

For further information, please contact the members of the Interim Steering Committee in the relevant country or state (see back page).

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MOST farmers in the Bainsdale area in Eastern Victoria each year, about lambing time, get out the poison baits in an effort to protect their new born lambs from foxes. The Bairnsdale farmers usually do this on an individual basis or as part of a small neighbourhood group.

With an better understanding of the widespread movement of foxes, it is easy to see why highly localised action was having only limited success. Foxes in Victoria are declared pest animals and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) has always been involved in advice to farmers and in the preparation and sale of baits.

The formation of LandCare Groups has brought new opportunities for pest plant and animal control on farms. Last autumn, a local Landcare Group decided to run a fox control program on a more extensive group basis. While the result was a much higher lambing percentages for the area, there were still losses due to migratory foxes moving through from untreated properties and subsequently filling the void left by the poisoned foxes.

This year the Landcare Group decided to approach adjoining groups and conduct a coordinated control program. The program began in December 1993, when a speaker from the manufacturers of the Fox-Off bait was asked to address a joint DCNR and Landcare Group meeting on baiting techniques. From this discussion the enthusiasm began to grow and DCNR was approached to organise a coordinated baiting program on a major scale.

Increasing awareness

By February 1994, other Landcare Groups had called meetings of their own members to discuss a coordinated program to increase awareness and gain support. DCNR officers talked at these meetings on such issues as the density and habits of foxes and the effect they have, not only on new born lambs, but also on native birds and animals.

By now 4 Landcare Groups were supporting the program, together with the local Shire Council. To improve the program further non-landcare group members of the community had to become involved, or at least aware of the program. Newspaper articles began in early February to increase the community's awareness of the problem and the need to have a large coordinated program for it to be successful.

Newspaper articles began by introducing

What is required of a successful group extension program ?

- A Project
- A high level of communication
- Change or acceptance
- Some commitment
- Coordination
- Successful outcome

When you can combine all of these with an issue that also has an enforcement flavour and the result is still positive, you can be assured that your program was successful.

By
LAURIE NORMAN

*Catchment Coordinator
Department of Conservation
and Land Management
Bairnsdale Vic*

the habits of foxes, their movements, the numbers that could be expected and their effect on wildlife. This portrayed the fox as being a real pest and not a soft and cuddly native animal as some people thought.

Articles appeared in the newspaper on a weekly basis, together with advertisements outlining the proposed coordinated program.

Eventually following a month of media saturation, including newspaper articles and radio interviews the date for the baiting program was set. Properties were selected with specific times set aside for DCNR staff to sell prepare and sell bait,

and demonstrate the method of setting the baits.

At the end of the day, thirty one farmers had attended the selected baiting stations and in the following week another thirty five new farmers had called at the DCNR office to purchase bait supplies.

60 farmers now involved

In about three months, over sixty farmers have become involved in a major coordinated program. I put this down to good extension techniques:

- identification of a problem (in this case by the community group),
- good communication skills (guest speaker, involvement of other Groups, media use),
- committed Group members and DCNR staff and
- a program that was seen to be successful.

The end result is expected to be an ongoing annual effort by an increasing number of community members - both rural and urban - to tackle fox control.

Group extension for effective fox control

