

gBrief

A NEWSLETTER FOR DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD STAFF
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**Student
winner
Page 2**



**Wheat quality
courses
Page 3**



**Cooking
classes
Page 6**

Farm focus for new website

The Department of Agriculture and Food has a new virtual 'shopfront'.

The upgraded website, launched this month, is designed to bring useful and attractively packaged information to the State's farmers, landholders and other interested groups.

It looks and performs better and provides a solid platform for future developments.

It is hoped to be upgraded further before the end of the year with even more functions and features including weather graphics and spatial information relating to individual landholdings for those who register on the site.

With the new architecture in place, we now have a website that's easier to navigate and faster to access than ever.

The new site loads five times faster than the previous version and accessibility for vision-impaired customers has improved dramatically.

It has been designed to cater for the majority of our customers using the previous generation of personal computers and notebooks over low bandwidth connections.

The Department's web team overhauled the site at speed within four months.



Tony Moran of the Department of Agriculture and Food with the new website.

It would have taken other organisations 12 to 18 months but we have a clear vision, a dedicated team and a clear focus on what we want to do, which is to be customer and citizen-centric.

To see the new site, go to www.agric.wa.gov.au.

Medal for Dusty

Peter Mangano, Senior Technical Officer, Entomology

Development officer Dusty Severtson has been awarded the Royal Society of Western Australia Student Medal for 2006. The presentation is awarded annually for the most outstanding science students in each of Western Australia's universities.

Dusty received the society medal for science as a joint recipient with a geophysics student, both of whom completed honours studies at Curtin University in 2006.

The Society Science Medal accompanied by a \$250 cheque comes to Dusty on top of previous awards



from Curtin University's Department of Environmental Biology for 'Best Honours Student 2006' and TMA Corporation prize awarded in December 2006.

Dusty commenced work with the Entomology Plant Biosecurity section of the Department in November 2006 with part funding from the National Invertebrate Pest Initiative Project, supported by GRDC. His role is to assist with further improvements to the successful PestFax service as well as conduct research on wheat curl mite and its role as a vector of wheat streak mosaic virus.

South West Invasive Species Team Meeting

Kate Matthews, Biosecurity Communications Officer, Invasive Species

Members of the South West Invasive Species team recently had good reason to tell each other to jump off a cliff!

Merribrook Retreat at Cowaramup was the venue for the team's annual meeting which this year involved team building and trust activities as well as a trip to the coast to abseil off a 40 meter cliff face.

Abseiling off the cliffs at Willyabrup provided a daunting challenge for some, others simply couldn't wait to leap off the edge and all 20 members of the team went down the cliffs at least once.

While abseiling may not have been everyone's cup of tea, all staff members agreed that the meeting was a fantastic experience.

Julie Webber, biosecurity officer at Bridgetown said the activities at Merribrook built trust and brought the team closer together.

"I was in a team with two guys I never really see or make contact with and have never had a chance to get to know. We worked well together and I think respected each other more for it."

Regional Biosecurity manager Barry Davies also enjoyed the experience.

"I found it an enjoyable time to socialise with staff that I don't normally have much to do with. I'm not a lover of heights and wasn't relishing the thought of going over the

edge. But actually doing it (3 times on the 40 metre) was really good fun!"

Bunbury's Brian Smith spoke for everyone at the end of the trip when he thanked Project manager Simon Merewether for organising such a beneficial team meeting.

"It was great to test your limits to work as a team and I also got some inspiration and new ideas to put in place in the work place during our night time discussion."



Members of the South West Invasive Species team

Ten Years of Wheat Quality Courses

Steve Penny Jnr, wheat development officer

The Department of Agriculture and Food has marked 10 years delivering courses designed to assist the WA grains industry increase its knowledge of grain quality and international and domestic market requirements.

The Wheat Quality course conducted on 12 July for CBH staff marked the 10th year of this extension activity.

The first course was delivered in February 1998. It was developed through a collaboration between the Department and Weston Milling, and Ben Curtis from Department's Esperance office was a key driver of the concept and the development of the program.

Most of the courses have been held at the Centre for Cropping Systems in Northam and have included a visit through the Weston Milling flour mill. Up to three of these courses are delivered each year to groups of growers, agronomists and CBH staff.

The courses include practical sessions aimed to help participants better understand how agronomic management decisions affect the quality of the end products made from grain.

These sessions include handling wheat protein and starch to demonstrate the properties and identify what makes wheat suitable for a range of end use products. Participants also get

the opportunity to make noodles from flours of differing quality.



Steve Penny from the Department in Katanning presents a certificate of appreciation to Weston Milling in Northam to acknowledge their collaboration in the delivery of Wheat Quality courses conducted over the past 10 years.

Seed certification service accredited

Mr Mark Holland, Manager, AGWEST Plant Laboratories

The Department's Seed Certification unit is the first to be granted NATA accreditation in Australia, required by the Australian Seeds Authority.

The accreditation, achieved with the aid of senior seed certification officer Mike Davies and QA officer Christine Wood, will help bring all seed certification service providers in Australia to a common service delivery standard.

Seed Certification ensures quality planting seed is available to underpin healthy domestic plant industries. Certified seed also has access to European and most other international markets.

With just 18 months in the role,



Mike stepped up to document the procedures, standardise the necessary records and deliver the required training and audit services to the seed industry.

Christine achieved her first NATA accreditation, highlighting her ability to document procedures and her willingness to become deeply familiar with NATA requirements.

Christine will now concentrate on gaining NATA accreditation for AgWest Plant Laboratories plant disease diagnostics service, and as part of her biosecurity role, document the procedures of the quarantine pathology unit.

Left: Mike Davies and Christine Wood

More news from around the Department

Workshops to control bridal creeper

10 July

The Department of Agriculture and Food will be conducting a workshop on 9 August at Boyanup to educate the public on how to control Bridal creeper, one of the worst environment weeds in Australia.

Look out for Lovebirds in Tom Price

11 July

Residents and visitors to Tom Price are asked to report sightings of Peach Faced Lovebirds (*Agapornis roseicollis*) to the Department of Agriculture and Food, following the discovery of a number of the birds in the town.

Information on-line to assist farmers

11 July

Farmers seeking information about managing in a dry season can now access it quickly on-line through the Department website. The 'Dealing with season 2007' web page contains information on managing seasonal issues as well as climatic forecasts and information on financial and community assistance services.

Breeding success for Breach Strike Resistance

12 July

The State's sheep producers could in the future be breeding Merino sheep that do not need mulesing in the WA environment. Researchers are leading the way with a significant breakthrough after using selection tools to produce a line of un-mulesed sheep with the same level of breech strike as sheep that were surgically mulesed.

Calculating feed supply a simple task

12 July

Producers now have access to a useful tool to assist them in making decisions about feed supply and demand for sheep and cattle. The Feed Demand Calculator will be showcased as part of the Department's Agribusiness Livestock Updates on July 24 and 25.

WA wool science identifies fine ends

12 July

Wool research undertaken by the Department of Agriculture and Food has been successful in assembling commercial fine end wool batches from Western Australian wool. Researchers have developed selection algorithms which predict wool lots, from the Fremantle auction catalogue, that may exhibit fine end properties when processed into a combed top.

GLA Update

13 July

Grain Licensing Authority (GLA) chairman Wayne Obst today announced the Authority had granted a special export licence for 60,000 tonnes of feed barley to the Middle East.

NLIS Mature Bulls Exemption Extended

17 July

Mature bulls can continue to be sold to slaughter without a National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) electronic device up until 30 June 2008.

Esperance Beef Producers Survey 2006

19 July

A survey of Esperance Beef producers has revealed a positive outlook for the district's cattle industry with sixty per cent of those surveyed intending to increase breeder numbers.

Variable profits from feedlot lambs

19 July

The Department of Agriculture and Food has used radio frequency identification technology to highlight enormous variations in the performance and profitability of lambs finished in a commercial feedlot.

Discussion paper seeks input into food strategy

19 July

Department of Agriculture and Food Director General Ian Longson today announced the release of a discussion paper to shape the future of the WA food industry.

Royal Show 2007 - volunteers needed

The 2007 Perth Royal Show runs from Saturday 29 September to Saturday 6 October and shifts are still available for staff to fill on weekday and weekends.

Remember to check with your manager before signing up to work.

Volunteers receive:

- Retro style polo shirt to wear during show week and

keep at the end of the show;

- One additional entry pass to the show for a family member and/or friend for each shift they work; and
- Up to \$10 reimbursement per shift for public transport/parking.

To register, contact Gwen Craen on gcaen@agric.wa.gov.au or on extension 3278.

No comment on policy

All public servants, including staff here at the Department of Agriculture and Food, are required to separate their personal views and opinions from the policies and directions of the State Government and its departments.

While we all have a personal opinion, we should stay well clear of commenting on a government policy either in support or as criticism. This is a vital protective mechanism for individual staff.

Sometimes it is challenging to separate a personal view from a policy, but it is important that we do – especially when dealing with the media or the public. It is appropriate to decline all media questions relating to policy, for example “It is not appropriate for me to discuss the policy of Government... or That is a question for Government...”

The Department’s Code of Conduct, Section 8.7 Dealing with the Media, states:

In general staff should advise the Media Liaison Officer before dealing with the media particularly major rural or metropolitan media outlets.

Officers authorised to make public comments shall:

- not give personal views on matters of government policy or administration;
- avoid making any comment which could undermine public confidence in the Department or the Government as a whole;
- not publicly criticise any political party;
- not speculate of future government policy.

The Director General, Executive Directors and nominated officers are responsible for discussing publicly the Department’s policy directions. It is the responsibility of State Government Minister’s and members to comment on Government policy.

For further information contact Media Liaison, Public Affairs on 9368 3325.

Life Membership for Jill Maughan

Pat Thorn, Baron-Hay Rostrum Club

Jill Maughan was recently awarded Honorary Life Membership of the Baron Hay Rostrum Club 44.

The speaking club, based at the Department’s South Perth office, has been up and running for 20 years largely thanks to Jill’s initiative and encouragement.



Prior to retiring a few years ago, Jill was our Librarian and now spends time golfing, assisting the WA Historical Society and presenting a segment on the Radio for the Print Handicapped.

Jill said the experience and confidence in public speaking gained from membership of the Baron Hay Rostrum Club 44 meant she could enjoy her radio speaking engagement.

The club offers a structured learning programme – for beginners, the Personal Development Programme (PDP) and for the more advanced speakers, the Intermediate Development Programme (IDP) – as a way for members to gain skills and experience, and to chart their progress. This means members are able to move from being mortally petrified of public speaking to becoming confident, effective speakers.

The club welcomes visitors to its weekly Tuesday lunchtime meetings held from 12.30 pm to 1.30 pm, usually in Conference Room 1. More information is available from Anita Thompson on 9368 3845 or Roselia Fogliani on 9368 3886.

Left.: Jill Maughan accepting her Honorary Life Membership. Photo by Gilbert Matthews



Avoiding the cold and flu bugs this season

There are some simple steps we can take to reduce our risk of catching colds and flu.

One way to build and protect your natural immunity and defences, is to get plenty of rest, eat well and drink plenty of fluids.

Firstly, hand washing is important. Wash your hands often with soap and scrub for at least 15 seconds. Consider carrying an alcohol based hand gel for times when you cannot get to a sink.

Use disinfectant cleaners to routinely clean counters, sinks, doorknobs, telephones and any other surfaces that may be contaminated. Carefully (and routinely) clean computer surfaces such as keyboards and your mouse.

Try to cover and contain coughs and sneezes to limit the spread of airborne particles, and then wash your hands again. Always avoid shaking hands if you have been coughing and sneezing. On explanation, others will appreciate and understand this gesture.

Of course, these are not guarantees, but they will help to reduce your exposure and risks of colds and flu. It's also advisable, if you have a cold or flu to stay at home and minimise contact with others for the first few days.

Cooking Classes - A Recipe for Success

Heather Hingston



Chef Troy Grzelka from Life Skills Hospitality Group has become a familiar face around South Perth. Over the past couple of months he has run a four week '30 Minute Meal' course and 'Thai Cooking' course.

The individually funded courses have been well received by staff. The variety of recipes, relaxed atmosphere and flexibility of the course has contributed to their huge success.

Troy is available to travel to various locations to deliver his expertise. If you have interested staff, or you are looking for a great team building activity you can contact Life Skills Hospitality Group on (08) 646 77 111 or view their website <http://www.lifeskillshospitality.com.au>.



Marc Widmer and chef Troy Grzelka

AgBrief information

Contact the Editor

To send AgBrief items or for distribution enquiries, contact the AgBrief Editor: Bin 9, South Perth, by email at agbred@agric.wa.gov.au or by phone on 9368 3278.

Editorial Policy

AgBrief is the internal newsletter for Department of Agriculture and Food staff. It aims to keep staff up-to-date on staffing and management matters, as well as communicating what's happening across the Department.

Articles and photographs are welcome and appreciated.

Deadlines and publishing dates

Deadline (Wednesday)	Publication Date (Thursday)
1 August	9 August
15 August	23 August
29 August	6 September
12 September	20 September

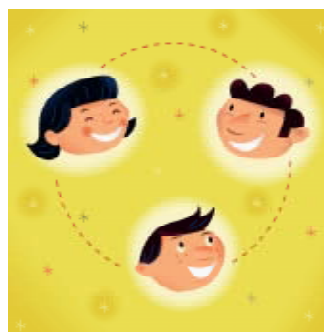
Customer service for everyone

Diane Andersen, Project Officer, Human Resources

The Department has a responsibility to ensure its services are accessible to all Western Australians and is equipped to respond to the different needs of the State's diverse community.

One step to achieving this is by enabling non-English speaking clients or those that have a hearing or speech impairment with access to service providers who can assist with meeting their needs. If you have a client with a special need, you can refer them to one of the following service providers.

- **National Relay Service for clients with a hearing or speech impairment - Phone 133 677** (hearing impairment) or **1300 555 727** (speech impairment)
The National Relay Service is a telephone service that uses specially trained officers in a call centre to act as a 'relay' between the person with a hearing or speech impairment and you. For example, if the person on the line has a hearing impairment, the relay officer types your responses so they can be read via a special phone known as a TTY or textphone. Further information can be obtained from the NRS website <http://www.relayservice.com.au/>.
- **TIS National – translating and interpreting service - Phone 131 450**



The Department of Immigration and Citizenship operates TIS National which facilitates contact between non-English speakers and interpreters. Special nationwide conference call facilities allow three-way conversation between the English-speaking and non-English-speaking people and the TIS National interpreter. TIS National also provides on-site interpreters if face-to-face meetings are required. Further information can be obtained from <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/factsheets/91tis.htm>.

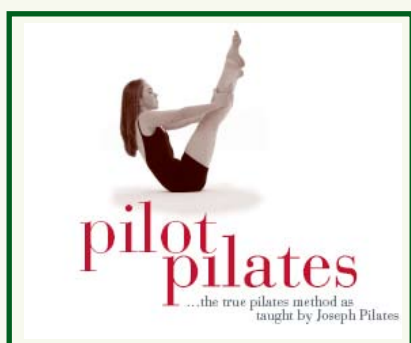
- **DAFWA Information Delivery and Information Resources - 9368 3201, webteam@agric.wa.gov.au**
Should a client require a publication or information from DAFWA's internet site in an alternative format (e.g. Braille, audio, language other than English), the Department's Information Delivery and Information Resources units are able assist.

If you require any further information please contact Diane Andersen, Human Resource Consultant on 9368 3338.

NAIDOC events in Moora



Staff in Moora celebrate NAIDOC week.



Pilates

Intermediate class Tuesday
Beginner class starting Thursday 2nd August
from 7:45am in the Gym - Building 14
Cost is \$120 for 10 class
contact Kay Hardie 0403 812 391

Library News

Irene Kustra, A/Librarian, South Perth

Alerting Services helping you keep updated with the latest published information

Keeping updated with information in your professional field, as well as with general trends is increasingly becoming more difficult with the large volumes of information being published.

The Library has a range of alerting services aimed at helping you save time by keeping you regularly updated with new developments and information from quality agricultural and other relevant information sources.

Why not try out these services and see how they can help keep you informed and updated.

New Titles lists

- A monthly list of new books, reports, and departmental publications received in the Library.
- The latest issues back to 12 months are available from the Library website: <http://agweb/Business/infoserv/infodelivery/Library/services/currentaware/newtitleslist.htm>
- To receive the latest issues, contact the Library on 9368 3201 or email Library Enquiries.

Farming topics newsletter

- A monthly newsletter listing new articles on general topics covering livestock, crops, farm management, land, water and environment, horticulture, pests, weeds and diseases. The information is collated from Australian and overseas farming magazines such as Farming Ahead, Australian Farm Journal, Australian Grain, Australian Viticulture, Acres USA. The list also includes links to internet resources.
- Covering the latest information in farming, this list is aimed at extension staff.
- The latest issues back to 12 months are available from the Library website: <http://agweb/Business/infoserv/infodelivery/Library/services/currentaware/farmti.htm>

- To receive the latest issues, contact the Library on 9368 3201 or email Library Enquiries

Ovid Current Contents

- Are you currently working on a research project? Then the Ovid Current Contents may be the solution to keeping you updated with the latest available articles from research journals in your special project.
- Ovid Current Contents is an online bibliographic database covering hundreds of research journals in the following subject areas: agriculture, biology, environmental and life sciences, chemical, physical and earth sciences.
- The information covers the most recent issues, bridging the gap between the publication of research in journals and their appearance in abstracting and indexing databases.
- Library staff will prepare a profile covering the keywords in your project and save the profile on the Ovid Current Contents database. Each week when the database is uploaded you receive an email alert with details of new articles published.
- The database is available from the Library website for searching. A profile form is available to complete to join the service: <http://agweb/Business/infoserv/infodelivery/Library/services/awareness.htm>

Library Management Alerts Service (LIMAS)

- Are you interested in keeping up to date with the latest management information?
- LIMAS helps you access the latest management information quickly.
- The Library emails staff on the LIMAS mailing list table of contents for selected management journals and supplies photocopies of articles requested.
- The service covers the following journals: Harvard Business Review, Business Review Weekly, Economist, and Management Today.
- To join this service, contact the Library 9368 3201 or email Library Enquiries

Insurance Certificates of Currency for Department of Agriculture and Food 2007/08

Mike Watson, Senior Finance Officer, Business Services

Insurance Certificates of Currency for 2007/08 can be found on Agweb under the following link <http://agweb/Business/finance/Insurance.htm> .

Any queries please contact Mike Watson on extension 3700.

GST changes

Mike Watson, Senior Finance Officer, Business Services

Important GST changes announced in the 2007-08 Budget are designed to give small businesses more flexibility and an easier-to-use, less complex tax system.

The key GST changes that apply from 1 July 2007 are:

- increase the GST registration threshold from \$50,000 to \$75,000 for businesses, and from \$100,000 to \$150,000 for non-profit bodies;
- increase the threshold for when a valid tax invoice is required to claim GST credits from \$55 to \$82.50 (inclusive of GST).

The increase of the GST registration threshold will mean clients that have a GST turnover of less than \$75,000 (or \$150,000 for non-profit bodies) will have the option to:

- cancel their GST registration (note: they would then be ineligible to claim fuel tax credit claims)
- choose to report and pay GST annually or
- continue with their current GST arrangements.

Taxi operators are still required to be registered for GST regardless of their turnover.

The change to the tax invoice requirement means:

1. That a valid tax invoice is no longer required in order to claim GST credits for business purchases of \$82.50 or less (GST inclusive). **Refer to note on Departmental Policy.**

2. It is also no longer a requirement to issue a valid tax invoice for sales made up to \$82.50 (GST inclusive).

3. **As a result, the threshold for withholding from a supplier that does not provide an ABN has also increased from \$50 to \$75 (GST exclusive)**

With changes in the GST thresholds, some businesses may elect to withdraw from the GST regime and, therefore, will cease to issue TAX Invoices. Accordingly, as with all invoices, staff should ensure that they hold a 'VALID TAX INVOICE' before using the TAX CODE 'STD' against payments.

Department Policy

To ensure the Department recovers its full entitlements under GST, our solution is that for a supply under \$75 (exclusive of GST) an input tax credit should not be claimed unless one of the following conditions is met:

- You receive a compliant tax invoice for that supply.
- You receive a receipt that breaks down the cost of the goods and the GST component.
- The receipt is for a taxi or the purchase of fuel.
- You receive a receipt that states the amount is inclusive of GST.
- If the conditions above are not clear on the receipt/ docket then you must ask at the time of purchase whether 'GST' is included in the transaction and request the business to notate the receipt accordingly.

Any queries please contact Mike Watson on 3700.

Yoga

Wednesday and Friday
from 12noon to 1pm
In the Gym – Building 14
Cost is \$10 per class



Events Calendar

For full details on agricultural events, go to the DAFWA website and search 'Events'.

Training news

July and August 2007

Course	Funding	Location	August	September
Driver Training Skills (1 day)	CF	FF	29	6, 25
<i>Mandatory for all officers required to use Department vehicles</i>				
Four Wheel Driver Training (2 day) Mandatory	CF	FF	30-31	7-10
<i>Prerequisite – Driver Training Skills - Mandatory for all Department officers using 4WD at work</i>				
Driver Development	CF	FF		14
<i>Mandatory for all staff who completed Driver Safety Course before 2003</i>				
OSH Workshop (1 day) Mandatory for all staff	CF	FF		4
Making your Workstation Work for You		FF		4
<i>Recommended for officers who use computers (2 hours)</i>				
Introductory Workplace First Aid (1 day)	CF	FF		17
<i>Available to staff not required to do Apply basic first aid training</i>				
Apply First Aid (Competency A) (2 days)	CF	FF		11-12
<i>Mandatory for all officers using powered mobile machinery, working in remote areas, involved in stock handling or designated first aiders for Department facilities</i>				
Apply First Aid Refresher (Competency A) (1 day)	CF	FF		13
<i>Mandatory for all staff who completed the two day course more than three years ago.</i>				
Corporate Induction (1 day) Mandatory for all staff	CF	SP		5
Equal Opportunity Awareness (1 day) Mandatory	CF	FF		3
Indigenous Australian Cultural Awareness (1 day)	CF	FF	28	21
<i>Mandatory for all staff</i>				
Professional Effectiveness Program (Certificate 3 in Business – FLM) <i>Ongoing course – 2nd session</i>	CF	FF		19-20 (2 days)
Management Development Program Diploma in Business - FLM <i>Ongoing course – 2nd session</i>	CF	FF		5-7 (3 days)
Effective Assertive Communications		FF		26

2007 COMPUTER COURSES: Course details are available on the Training Website. For further information contact DAWA Computer Training Provider, CT&D Australia – Tel 9221 0688.

Computer bookings: For logistical reasons, when booking a computer course please fax your application directly to the consultants CT&D, not ODTU. Fax: 9221 0687.

Training nomination forms are available on the Agweb Training Site Homepage.

- Nomination forms submitted for centrally funded programs require a supervisor signature only. ODTU will incur centrally funded programs appropriately.
- Managers are reminded that in the event of a staff member withdrawing from a course two weeks prior to its commencement without a replacement, their cost centre will be charged the full cost of that course.
- Nomination forms submitted for non-centrally funded programs still require supervisor and incurring officer signatures before being accepted for any training program.

Accessing the Training calendar online

From the Agweb homepage, click on T, then Training Agency Staff or go to <http://agweb/Business/hr/training/index.htm>