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Monday, 13 November 2006

No. 23

## **OILSEEDS NEWS**

### **SOYBEANS GUIDE PUBLISHED**

The second edition of the Soybeans Planting Guide has been published just in time for the opening of the soybean cropping season, which starts this week in the Riverina and northern Victoria.

This planting guide, which is updated annually, contains topical information and seasonal reminders of some of the more critical aspects of soybean crop management. It also includes detail on water use efficiency and the best available varieties for crushing and human consumption markets.

The guide can be downloaded from <http://www.agric.nsw.gov.au/reader/oils> under 'Soybeans'.

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### **IMMEDIATE CUTS IN ALLOCATION TO MURRUMBIDGEE AND MURRAY IRRIGATORS**

The NSW Government is taking immediate action to secure water for communities in the Murray and Murrumbidgee Valleys, Minister for Natural Resources, Ian Macdonald announced today.

Minister Macdonald said the worst drought in more than 100 years, with record low inflows in each month from June to October, increased transmission losses due to the low levels of water in the system and the reduction in water diversions from the Snowy Mountains Scheme had forced the Government to take strong action to protect town water supplies in the bush.

Minister Macdonald said the phases of the plan include:

- Immediate suspension of the Murrumbidgee, Murray and Lower Darling Water Sharing Plans and a reduction in water allocations.
- Action is being taken to increase end of system flows in the Murrumbidgee River and shore up the ability to meet town water supply in the Murray Valley.
- The introduction of ‘water order debiting’ for water that cannot be re-regulated in both valleys for this water year.
- Allowing the carry-over of unused high security allocations from 06/07 for use in 07/08 consistent with the plan rules.
- An emergency deployment of agronomists and primary industry specialists to assist farmers with critical business decisions in light of the new cutbacks.

“As the drought continues our priority must be town water supplies, it’s as simple as that,” he said.

“That is why we have come up with a five-point plan to secure supply. It will remain in force and be reassessed as water becomes available.”

Minister Macdonald said there would be an immediate cut in water availability for water users in the Murrumbidgee and NSW Murray valleys.

“To ensure water demand does not outstrip supply, high security irrigation accounts in the Murrumbidgee will be reduced by 10% of entitlement, from the 95% previously announced.

“There will also be a reduction in general security accounts equalling 5% of entitlement to 10%, down from the 15% previously announced.

“It is important to note town water supply and basic landholder rights will not be reduced but cannot be traded.”

Minister Macdonald said in the NSW Murray Valley new measures were also being put in place as part of the Government’s Five-Point Plan.

“The Government has no choice other than to reduce both high security and carry over accounts by another 32%, leaving only 68% of the remaining account water for extraction” he said.

Minister Macdonald said the Government would also save about 16,000 megalitres by stopping releases to Forrest Creek on the Murrumbidgee.

“Almost 90% of water released for stock and domestic purposes to Forrest Creek is lost along the way. Landowners will now have to consider moving their stock, so that these water needs may be drawn from Billabong Creek”, Minister Macdonald said.

“These moves help reduce demand and encourage conservation of water,” Mr Macdonald said.

“Inflows into the respective valleys will be reallocated to the environmental accounts as soon as conditions improve during the coming months and water may then be diverted into high priority areas where the wetlands, red gums and other floodplain environments are severely stressed or dying from lack of water.

“The loaned environmental water from the Murrumbidgee Environmental Water Account will be the first to be re-credited from inflows into the Murrumbidgee after March for potential use for environmental purposes in autumn after meeting town water supply.

“It is also important to note the high security users will not be able to use or trade more than 100% of their entitlement in 2007/08 and that none of the provisions apply to town or basic landholder rights.

“These are difficult decisions, there’s no doubt about that, but they are necessary. The consequences of not acting swiftly are far more serious if farmers continue to sink money into crops that can not be sustained,” Minister Macdonald said.

The Minister said the temporary suspension of trade irrigation entitlements introduced last week had also been lifted today.

“This applies to interstate, inter-valley and within valley water trade. However, the restrictions on the trade from the Murrumbidgee to the Murray upstream of the junction remain,” he said.

“I know that all farmers are suffering terribly at the moment and we will be doing our all to provide them with the utmost support to make the right business decisions.

Minister Macdonald said that an increased level of compliance action would be undertaken immediately to respond to industry calls to ensure new allocation levels are complied with.

“I expect the vast majority of irrigators will understand our action and act responsibly,” he said.

“But measures are necessary and will have to be enforced by the Government. We do not want honest businesses penalised for doing the right thing.”

All measures will come into effect at 5pm today.

Media contact: Jason Bartlett (Macdonald) 0438 209 281 / Lisa Miller (DNR) 0410 663 723.

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## **CUTS TO IRRIGATION ALLOCATIONS IN MURRAY AND MURRUMBIDGEE SPARKS EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

The Lemna Government is co-ordinating an emergency response to immediately help farmers in the Murray and Murrumbidgee regions, Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald said today.

Minister Macdonald said a regional team is being put in place following the Government's move to secure water supplies for communities in the Murray and Murrumbidgee Valleys following cuts to

“The Government took action today to secure water supplies in these areas during the worst drought in 100 years,” Minister Macdonald said.

“Some tough decisions have had to be made but as the drought continues our priority must be the securing of town water supplies – that is why we have been forced to make a cut in water availability for water users in both the Murray and Murrumbidgee Valleys.

“I have instructed the DPI to immediately pull together 24 extra staff with local expertise in irrigation, agronomy, livestock and horticulture to help farmers through the crisis.

“From early next week the team members can be accessed through DPI offices in Deniliquin, Yanco and Hay – and will be sent out to areas of need.”

Minister Macdonald said the teams would be working closely with local industry groups and with Catchment Management Authorities.

“We want to make sure help goes where it is needed – we are all in this together,” Minister Macdonald said.

“The emergency teams will be addressing issues including irrigation and on-farm management options, strategies for the survival of perennial plantings, best options for existing rice crops and other broad acre crops and pastures. They will also look at farm business decision tools and advice on alternatives available for dairy farmers, the livestock management of sheep and cattle and vegetable cropping options.

“DPI senior industry specialists will also be meeting with local industry representatives and irrigation companies while leading DPI scientists will also be used if needed for advice.”

“I would urge farmers located in these areas to contact the DPI officers in their local areas for support,” he said.

Minister Macdonald said a series of DPI workshops would also be held across the region in coming weeks.

Key Regional Contact Numbers:

- Deniliquin - 03 5881 9999
- Dareton - 03 5019 8400
- Hay - 02 6993 1608
- Griffith - 02 6960 1300
- Yanco - 02 6951 2611
- Wagga - 02 6931 2600
- Finley - 03 5883 1644
- Additional support will be handled through the Drought Hotline 1800 814 647

Media Contact: Jason Bartlett, 0438 209 281

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## **BE QUICK TO REGISTER FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP**

Numbers are filling fast for a stress management workshop for members of the community affected by drought.

The free event, organised by The Victorian Department of Primary Industries will be held on Tuesday 21 November at Longerenong College near Horsham from 10 am to 4 pm.

Clinical psychologist, Rob Gordon, will about how stress develops, what effects it has and how to develop strategies to manage it and avoid some of the serious consequences.

The day will provide a chance to discuss participants' current issues in interacting with drought affected people.

Seats are limited. For more information, or to RSVP, contact DeAnne Price on 03 5362 2111 or [deanne.price @ dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:deanne.price@dpi.vic.gov.au) by Friday 17 November.

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## **NO NEED TO BE AFRAID OF CANOLA HAY AND SILAGE**

Canola hay and wrapped silage will be commonly available animal feeds this year and there is no reason for farmers to be afraid to use this potentially valuable feed source for any class of livestock, provided they take commonsense precautions when introducing these feeds into their stock's diet.

That is the message that has come from a careful review of many years experience in the use of hay and silage made from failed or frosted canola crops, in both NSW and Victoria.

Canola hay and silage has been commonly fed to livestock over at least 15 years, with only rare instances of reported problems. Most of those problems have only involved a small number of animals from each flock or herd, and almost all have been associated with a rapid change of diet.

Generally, stock find canola hay and silage palatable, taking to it readily and wasting very little. The feed value can often be quite high, but quality analysis shows that there can be a wide range of values, related to variables such as time of cutting.

As a guide, recent results from the Victorian FeedTest® Service show canola fodder digestibility has been around 70%, metabolisable energy values around 10.5 MJ/kg, crude protein about 18% for hay and 20% for silage, and the Neutral Detergent Fibre (NDF) values have averaged 35%.

These average figures are more than acceptable for nutritional stockfeed. But because of the variability, the first recommendation for farmers wishing to use canola fodder is to obtain a quality analysis from the Victorian FeedTest® Service to help develop a feed plan for the animals.

There are a number of possible causes for the isolated occurrences of problems with canola fodder, including nitrate poisoning, but whatever the reasons, almost all reported problems have been linked to failure to take the precautions required to safely introduce the new feed.

There have been many instances of stock being fed canola hay as the sole maintenance ration, with no significant ill effects to the animals. However, it is preferable, where possible, to use another fodder source - such as cereal hay - as part of the ration.

To safely introduce animals to canola hay or silage, the following precautions are recommended:

- Obtain a Commodity Vendor Declaration from the farmer who grew the canola crop (or any similar feed source), stating what chemicals have been used, the dates of use, and the date the crop was cut. An industry accepted Commodity Vendor Declaration form can be found on the MLA website ([www.mla.com.au](http://www.mla.com.au)) by searching "vendor declaration", then clicking "Livestock Fodder Declarations". This document will then become part of the Vendor Declaration required to on-sell the livestock.

- Ask the grower about how much, and when, nitrogen fertiliser was applied, and about the level of drought stress in the crop. Fodder made from crops that were badly stressed, or received high applications of top-dressed nitrogen fertiliser, may have raised levels of nitrates.
- For an extra \$20.90 (including GST), the Victorian FeedTest® is able to analyse the level of nitrogen as nitrates in the feed. As long as care is taken when introducing the feed, stock can adapt to many types of feed, even those with raised nitrate levels.
- Do not offer large amounts of canola hay or silage to stock that are hungry or have empty stomachs. Introduce it slowly, by replacing a part of the more recent diet, increasing the proportion of canola hay over a period of days.
- Stock with access to dry pasture when introduced to canola fodder should have no problems. For contained stock, try to offer a mixture of fodder types, at least for the first two weeks of using canola.
- An additional strategy may be to introduce only a small number of animals to the feed in the ways described above, monitoring them closely for a number of days before introducing the canola hay to the remaining animals in the group.

Following these recommendations will make it very unlikely that any problems will be encountered.

For further information on feeding canola hay and silage contact DPI's James Whale on 5336 6633 or DPI's Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

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