

Riverlink News

Summer 2005
No. 75

Newsletter of the Riverlink network of horticultural research centres in Sunraysia-Riverland.

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New Chairman for Riverlink

Long term Riverlink Council member Kevin Cock was appointed Riverlink Chairman at a meeting in Mildura on 16 February. Kevin is a Sunraysia based citrus grower and is currently a board member of both the Australian Citrus Growers Inc and the Sunraysia Citrus Growers Inc. Kevin replaces Graham Robertson, who has chaired the Riverlink Council since December 1999. The Council plays an integral role in providing direction to the Riverlink horticultural research network. We welcome Kevin to his new role and thank Graham for his significant contribution over the last five years.



Citrus industry representative Kevin Cock (right) assumes the role of Riverlink Chairman from Graham Robertson at the Council's meeting in February.

Awards recognise regional research contributions

Three individuals and a regional research team were presented with Riverlink Awards during a ceremony held at CSIRO Merbein on 16 February. The annual Riverlink awards recognise outstanding contributions to horticultural research in Sunraysia-Riverland, and were

first conferred by the Riverlink Council in 2001. Outgoing Chairman of Riverlink, Graham Robertson, presented the awards stating that the 2005 winners were again indicative of the high calibre contributions to horticultural research in Sunraysia-Riverland.



Outgoing Riverlink Chairman, Graham Robertson (second from left) with this year's winners of the Riverlink Awards (from left): Jeff Milne Wingara Wine Group, Henry Tankard dried grape grower, Denis Sparrow Loxton Research Centre, Peter Clingeffer CSIRO Merbein, Dr Bob Emmett DPI-Mildura, and Belinda McCarthy CSIRO Merbein.

“These awards recognise the contribution made by industry to regional horticultural research, and celebrate the achievements of the excellent science and extension staff working within Riverlink,” Mr Robertson said. “This year’s winners are again outstanding examples of the proactive and visionary scientists and dedicated horticulturists in our region. We thank them for the contributions they make to Australia’s horticultural industries.”

Details of this year's award winners appear on page 2

Did you know....

Staff within the Riverlink network are currently working on more than 100 horticultural research and extension projects.

Riverlink Awards contd...

This year, the Riverlink Council presented two awards to regional staff. The first recipient, **Belinda McCarthy** from CSIRO Merbein, was

rewarded for her continued support to the Australian tablegrape industry. Belinda works with tablegrape growers and researchers across Australia as part of CSIRO's national table grape breeding project.



Joint Riverlink 2005 Staff Award winner Belinda McCarthy with outgoing Riverlink Chairman Graham Robertson

The joint recipient of the 2005 Riverlink Staff Award was **Denis Sparrow** from the Loxton Research Centre. Denis has been a major contributor to improving irrigation practices at



Riverlink 2005 Staff Award winner Denis Sparrow receives his award from Riverlink Chairman Graham Robertson

The Riverlink network is:

- CSIRO Plant Industry Merbein
- NSW Department of Primary Industries Dareton
- Department of Primary Industries Mildura
- Primary Industries & Resources South Australia Loxton Research Centre

a state and national level over the past twenty years. He is a foundation member of the South Australian Irrigated Crop Management Service, and pioneered innovative strategies for the adoption of modern irrigation methods and technology. Denis' contributions have enhanced Riverlink's capacity to service irrigators in the tri-state area.

Dried fruits industry stalwart **Henry Tankard**

was awarded this year's Riverlink Industry Award. A major supporter of dried grape research, Henry has contributed to Riverlink research for many years.



Riverlink 2005 Industry Award winner Henry Tankard receives his award for outstanding contributions to dried grape research

Henry is currently a member of the CSIRO Merbein Institutional Biosafety Committee and the Unique Dried Grapes Steering Committee, which oversees dried grape genetic improvement research.

The Riverlink team who worked on the **CRCV project 'Improving sustainability and wine grape quality in warm region irrigated vineyards'**, has

won this year's Riverlink Collaborative Team Award. This team, has achieved significant improvements in water use efficiency, disease



Attending members of the winning Riverlink 2005 Collaborative Team with Graham Robertson. From left: Dr Bob Emmett, Jeff Milne and Peter Clingeffer

management, yield and quality through irrigation and pruning technologies. These outcomes will have widespread implications for the Australian wine grape industry. Members of the team included: Peter Clingeffer and Rachel Ashley CSIRO Merbein, Dr Bob Emmett DPI-Mildura, Prof. Peter Dry University of Adelaide, and Craig Thornton and Jeff Milne from Wingara Winery.

PhD student sought for table grape industry study

The table grape research team at CSIRO Merbein Victoria are currently seeking a PhD student to investigate the physiological effects of modern table grape production technologies on grape berry development. The aim is to investigate the physiology of grape berry collapse associated with early maturation water loss, and berry shrinkage potentially linked with the timing of gibberellic acid application and its interaction with climatic conditions. The incidence of berry collapse has adversely affected the Australian table grape industry in recent seasons.

The successful student will become part of the Riverlink Post-

graduate Research Network, joining a group of eight postgraduate students in the Sunraysia region who are currently working on priority research for



Australian horticultural industries.

Berry collapse in Thompson Seedless is a significant problem for the Australian table grape industry

Honours degree or equivalent in science, agriculture or a related field is required, and the successful applicant must be eligible for PhD enrolment at La Trobe University. Applicants must also be Australian Citizens or have Permanent Residence status to be eligible to apply.

A stipend of \$25,000 per annum will be provided and the proposed commencement date is 1 July 2005. Some financial support to cover expenses such as travel, relocation and thesis costs is also available. The studentship is offered for a term of three years, subject to satisfactory progress. Funding has been provided by Horticulture Australia Ltd.

Further information is available from Dr Michael Treeby at CSIRO Merbein on 03 50513145 or email michael.treeby@csiro.au

New students in region

Nerida Crothers and Adrian Rakimov have recently commenced work in the Sunraysia region as part of the Riverlink Postgraduate Research Network. Nerida is an Honours



Victoria University Honours student Nerida Crothers and Melbourne University PhD student Adrian Rakimov have recently commenced study in the Sunraysia region.

student from Victoria University who is currently at DPI-Mildura doing field work. Nerida is investigating sun exposure of Chardonnay and its effect on grape and wine quality and is being supervised by Dr Mark Downey at DPI- Mildura.

Adrian is a PhD student who is studying biological control of grapevine scale. Adrian will be supervised by Dr Greg Buchanan at DPI-Mildura and Professor Ary Hoffman from Melbourne University.

Horticulture History Quiz:

Who Am I?

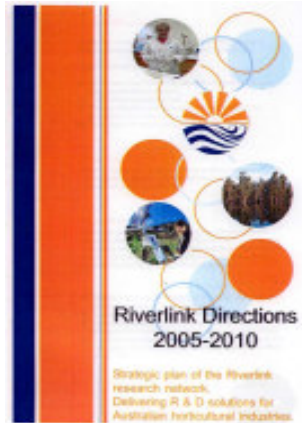
I was born on August 12, 1759 in Ludlow, England. My studies included plant nutrition, pest control and plant breeding. Considered ahead of my time, my research also included plant physiology, structural biology, and genetics. In 1804, I co-founded the Royal Horticultural Society (of England) with Sir Joseph Banks. I died in London, aged 79 and am considered the father of horticultural science.



If you think you know who I am, email your answer to merryl.whyte@dpi.vic.gov.au for your chance to win a mystery prize. First correct answer wins.

New Strategic Direction for Riverlink

During 2004, the Riverlink Council began the process of reviewing its strategic plan. The Council looked back at the achievements and challenges of Riverlink since its inception in 1991 and considered changes in horticultural industries and the operating environment for research agencies. Armed with this learning, the Council looked at what success for the Riverlink horticultural research network looked like in the future - and what needed to be done to achieve it. Three distinct goals for Riverlink Council 2005-2010 were determined:



Goal One

To pursue innovative approaches to planning, funding, resourcing and implementing major horticultural initiatives in the Sunraysia-Riverland region.

Goal Two

To ensure that Riverlink Programs are aligned with and responsive to client and member needs, and contribute to sustainable and profitable horticultural industries and communities.

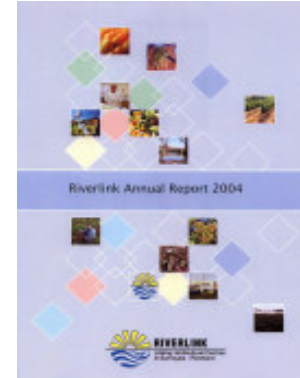
Goal Three

To create an effective collaborative research network in the Sunraysia-Riverland region, and ensure optimal use of resources.

Further information on the Riverlink Strategic Plan 2005-2010 can be found on the Riverlink website or by contacting Merryl Whyte on 03 50514569.

Release of Riverlink Annual Report 2004

The 2004 Riverlink Annual Report is now available. This report contains information and recommendations from the industry representatives on the Riverlink Council and reports on Riverlink Programs. A comprehensive list of current horticultural research projects underway in the Sunraysia-Riverland



region is also included, along with publication and staff lists from each Riverlink agency. The report can be viewed on the Riverlink website (address below). Limited hard copies are also available from Merryl Whyte on 03 50514569.

Have you visited the
Riverlink web site lately?



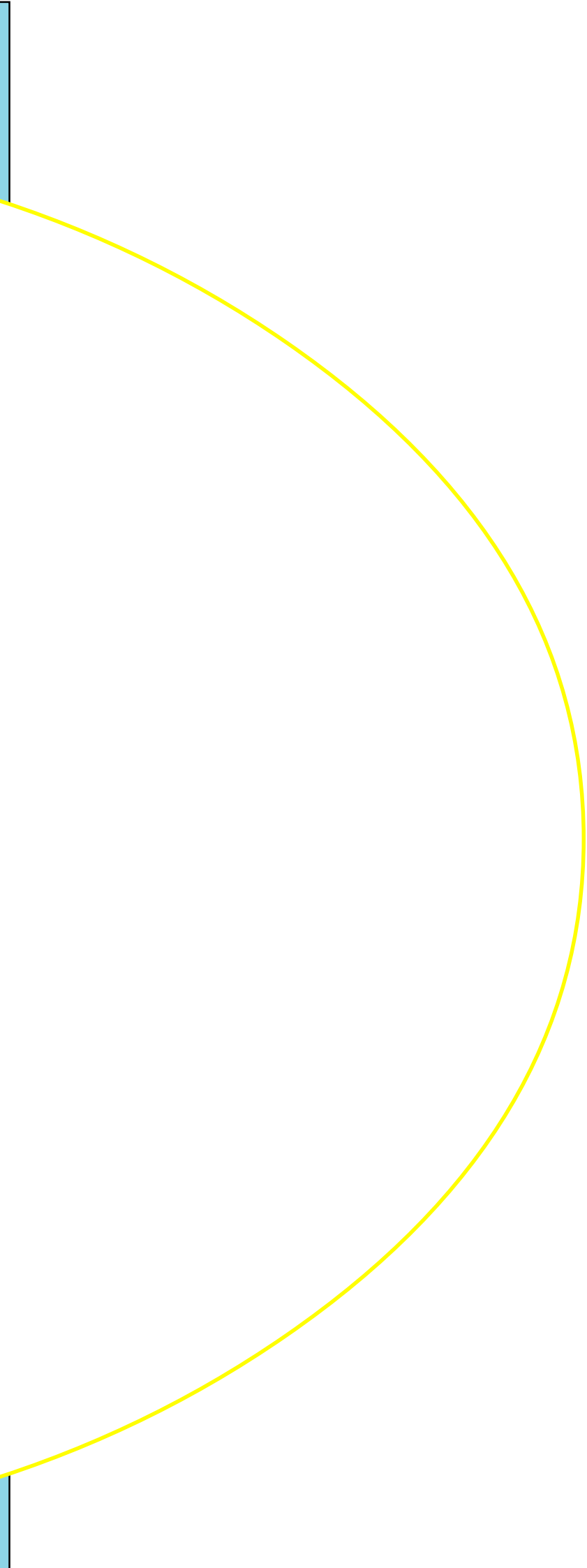
www.sardi.sa.gov.au/riverlink/riverlink.htm

Electronic Newsletters - the verdict

The first electronic version of the Riverlink newsletter was distributed in the first week of December 2004. To measure its effectiveness we conducted a random survey of readers over the Christmas/New Year period.

On the whole surveyed readers were generally impressed with the format and content of the electronic newsletter and like the environmentally-friendly aspect. Some recipients though found that they were overwhelmed by the numbers of emails they received and preferred to receive a hard copy.

To maintain the newsletter as an effective communication tool for Riverlink we will continue to distribute hard copies as required. If you wish to receive the Riverlink newsletter via e mail, please contact Merryl Whyte:
merryl.whyte@dpi.vic.gov.au



Regional Roundup

Updates from the Riverlink research centres

PIRSA/SARDI Loxton Research Centre T 08 8595 9100

Reducing the effects of salinity

Rob Stevens, Riverlink Program Leader Sustainable Horticulture (Land and Water Use) is currently leading a research program looking at reducing the effects of salinity in horticultural crops. Commencing in mid 2004, the program responded to reports that salinity levels in the River Murray are expected to rise over the medium term.



Riverlink Program Leader for Sustainable Horticulture, Rob Stevens, is leading a new research program on reducing the effects of salinity in horticulture.

“Sustaining horticultural production in the future will require new techniques that support management of cropping both during and following episodes of high salinity,” said Mr Stevens. “Our three year research program aims to develop techniques to manage cropping under reduced irrigation and higher salinities, and this is particularly relevant to irrigation areas of the Murray-Darling River.”

The program has R & D activities in three areas. The first involves assessing whether overseas work on cereal crops showing

foliar uptake of salt is sensitive to how water shanding is managed will extend to vegetables growing under sprinkler and centre pivot irrigation in Australia.

The second research focus is to identify vine rootstock cultivars which tolerate adverse chemical conditions associated with soil moisture store in the lower root zone. This is based on the development of deeper rooting due to reductions in irrigation volumes, and more widespread use of rootstocks.

Thirdly, the program will investigate the carryover effects of high sodium and chlorine salinities in grafted vines, characterising the effects of this pre-exposure to salinity on growth under non-saline conditions.

Funded by the South Australian Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation, through its Centre for Natural Resource Management, project work is being conducted at the PIRSA/SARDI Loxton Research Centre. In addition to Rob Stevens, two other staff have been appointed: Jo Pech Senior Research Officer, and Gary Grigson Senior Agricultural Officer.

DPI-Mildura T 03 50514500

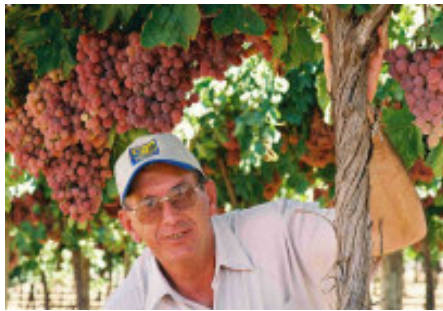
Our Rural Landscape

DPI-Mildura's Dr Greg Buchanan is leading two projects as part of the Victorian statewide initiative 'Our Rural Landscape' (ORL). This initiative commenced in 2003 and aims to achieve sustainable development through innovation.

Dr Buchanan heads up the 'Farming for the Future' and 'More from Less' projects, which form part of a suite of five major project areas within the initiative.

'Farming for the Future' is investigating the most efficient application of natural resources, aiming to increase production from agricultural

land using less water, and to develop productive uses for saline and nutrient rich wastewater.



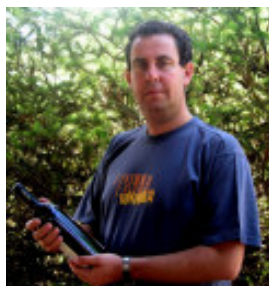
DPI-Mildura researcher Dr Greg Buchanan is leading ORL projects 'Farming for the Future' and 'More from Less'.

'More from Less' attempts to create higher value agriculture by minimising the use of natural resources - including the development of precision farming technologies that will lower production costs and reduce run-off.

Funded by the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, the ORL initiative is due for completion in June 2007. More information on the ORL initiative is available from the DPI website www.dpi.vic.gov.au

A Spanish View of Australian Viticulture

Currently visiting DPI-Mildura is Professor Javier Tardguila from the University of Rioja in Spain. Prof. Tardguila will spend six months in Australia studying the wine industry, with an emphasis on research and development.



Prof. Tardguila has admitted to being particularly fascinated by 'new world' viticulture, and has observed a few key differences between the Spanish and Australian wine industries. According to Prof. Tardguila, the productivity of Australian vineyards is significantly greater than Spain. He believes science, technology and an entrepreneurial approach by the Australian wine industry is what makes Australian wines so popular domestically and abroad. Prof Tardguila is encouraged by what he has seen of the industry so far and hopes to learn more about Australian wine before he returns to Spain in April.

NSW DPI Dareton T 03 50274409

Citrus Centre of Excellence

Renowned as a pioneer in citrus research, the NSW DPI Dareton Agricultural Research & Advisory Station was recently renamed in special recognition of its achievements.

Officially dedicated as the latest NSW DPI Centre of Excellence (Citrus) during a tour of the centre in late 2004 by NSW Minister for Primary Industries Ian Macdonald and Country Labor Member for Murray-Darling Peter Black, the centre became the 14th primary industry research centre to join the NSW DPI Centres of Excellence network.

CSIRO Plant Industry Merbein T 03 50513100

The CSIRO Flagship project on High Pressure Processing (HPP) has commenced at Merbein. This project focusses on creating high quality foods through HPP, which has the potential to preserve more of the natural and nutritional composition of food - which traditional forms of processing can adversely affect.



Dr Carla Wolbang recently joined the team at CSIRO Merbein to work on High Pressure Processing

The project involves scientists at CSIRO Plant Industry Merbein, Food Science Australia and CSIRO Health Sciences and Nutrition. Recently joining the team was Dr Carla Wolbang (above), from the University of Tasmania. Carla joins Steve Sykes, Mike Treeby, Jacqui Fitos and Rob Walker in working to develop a range of high value, processed foods.

In Touch

Information for Riverlink Staff



NEW STAFF

DPI-Mildura

Nardia Baker – *Viticulture Casual*

Nardia has completed the first year of a science degree at La Trobe University, Mildura. She previously worked in Physiology at CSIRO Plant Industry Merbein.



Andrew Brastrup – *Horticulture Casual*

Andrew completed a Fisheries Management and Aquaculture Degree at Deakin University in 2002 and is now working on the ORL project with Marissa Bailey.



Kate Cunnew – *Irrigation Scientist*

Kate has a Bachelor of Agricultural Science (Honours) from the University of Adelaide and began working at DPI-Mildura in late November 2004. Kate previously worked at CSIRO Merbein as a Technical Officer.



Nicole Dimos - *Viticare Regional Support Officer (Casual)*

Nicole is in the final stages of her PhD looking at Shiraz berry shrivel. Her final draft has just



been submitted and she eagerly awaits feedback in late February. Originally from Greensborough, Melbourne, Nicole is currently settling into her new workplace and her new home in Mildura.

Dr Karl Sommer – *ORL Future Farms Project Officer*

Dr Karl has joined DPI-Mildura after working at CSIRO Merbein for ten years as a research scientist. He recently worked in Milan as Director of Viticulture at a local winery, before travelling around South America in 2004.



CSIRO Plant Industry Merbein

Emily Rudd – *Apprentice Horticulture*
Emily recently began working at CSIRO Merbein as a Horticulture Apprentice.

Dr Carla Wolbang - *Postdoctoral Fellow*
Carla recently joined CSIRO Merbein after becoming part of the CSIRO Flagship project on High Pressure Processing.

FAREWELLS

NSW DPI-Dareton

Chris Wescombe -

Chris has left to NSW DPI to begin his business installing turf and irrigation.

Tania Midgely - *Salinity Advisory Officer*

Tania has moved from the Dareton to the Yanco office at NSW DPI continuing in her role as Salinity Advisory Officer.



DPI-Mildura

Sarah Hession - *Viticare Regional Support Officer*

Sarah Hession recently left DPI-Mildura as viticare trials regional officer to take up a role as a viticulturist for Matua Wines in Blenheim New Zealand.

CONGRATULATIONS

Kevin Cock - Riverlink Council Chairman



Staff at NSW DPI Dareton met with the new Chairman of the Riverlink Council, Kevin Cock (third from left), at a recent morning tea. Kevin is keen to meet with all the staff within Riverlink as part of his new role, and will visit the Loxton Research Centre on 23 March and DPI-Mildura on 4 April. At the meeting Kevin outlined new directions for the Riverlink Council and encouraged staff to provide feedback at any time.

New face from NSW DPI on the Riverlink Council

NSW DPI's Dr Trevor Gibson joined the Riverlink Council during December. Trevor is Director, Primary Industries Production Research NSW Department of Primary Industries based at the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute in Camden NSW. Trevor replaces long term Council member Doug Hocking who has moved on to another role within NSW DPI.



WEBSITES

www.newscientist.com

Access an overview of the the latest science and technology news from around the world (you will need to subscribe for full details). This site also includes information on science related jobs and studentships.

www.ulrichsweb.com

As recommended at the recent Riverlink.PRN seminar on Academic Publishing, this site is a bibliographic database providing detailed information on periodicals published throughout the world. It covers all subjects, and includes publications that are published regularly or irregularly and are circulated free of charge or by paid subscription.

www.affa.gov.au/corporate_docs/publications/media_releases/quarantine/archive/mrcitruscank.htm

Visit this site to learn why the humble Beagle is worth \$150 million to the Australia's Citrus industry.

ACG FOUNDATION TO ENCOURAGE INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

The Australian Citrus Growers Inc announced the launch of the Pat Barkley Foundation during its national conference in March. This foundation will assist the Australian citrus industry maintain access to world class technical expertise through the provision of travel grants for international travel to attend scientific meetings/workshops/ short term training programs or to visit with world leading scientists overseas.

Further information is available from ACG on *03 5023 6333 or 0418 891 814*

DIARY DATES

15,22 & 29 April	NSW DPI Irrigation Management Course Contact: Anthony Baird 03 50274409
24-25 May	Mildura Horticultural Field Days Contact: 0350235174
6-7 June	CRCV Symposium Sunraysia Tafe Mildura Contact: 08 83039405