

Computer a mess?

To follow on from the popular desk-based Farm Office workshops, Partners in Grain (PinG) WA are bringing computer workshops to towns throughout the WA wheatbelt.

Information technology specialists and PinG are teaming up to bring these workshops to country areas after repeated requests from farming families who have been unable to access good computer help. Within two weeks of announcing the program, 21 Western Australian towns had expressed interest in hosting one of these events.

“There is a growing need for Farm Office IT workshops in the bush,” says Ali Cooke, a farmer and PinG Reference Group member from Badgingarra. “Big organisations and those in the bigger centres have access to IT help desks, but there are who knows how many farm offices who struggle along not really knowing what they are doing – and having to deal with power surges and other issues. We have done three hard drives in two years.”

This need has seen the development of workshops which will give tips about:

- Electronic filing – budgets, farm records, photos, tax info;
- Backing up and dealing with power surges;
- Creating internet favourites;
- Virus software;
- QA records;
- Setting up your email system; and much more.

For workshop dates and other information see www.partnersingrain.org.au or call Julianne Hill on 0408 908 989. ■



Owen Brownley, Mount Madden WA farmer, with his computer downloading temperature readings in the paddock.

Windmill grass trials for the central west

Trials to combat the hard-to-control weed windmill grass in central west NSW will shortly be underway, run by the Grain Orana Alliance (GOA).

Maurie Street, GOA research and extension officer says conventional herbicide mixes are not working effectively so the weed is causing headaches for the region’s grain growers.

Maurie is currently mapping out trials that will investigate herbicide timing and the role of moisture stress in any herbicide failure.

“Windmill grass was identified as a high priority for research when we conducted focus groups in 2009,” he says.

“GOA may be able to shed some light on why conventional herbicide mixes aren’t working.

“We will also investigate other registered products and rates, adjuvants and other strategies such as the double-knock techniques where a different herbicide is applied a week to 10 days after the main herbicide application.”

The Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) funds GOA which was launched in 2009 based on the successful Northern Grower Alliance (NGA) which operates across northern NSW and southern Qld ground-truthing research in a commercial setting.

Timing for windrowing

Another research priority identified by local growers and explored during the 2009 winter was the impact of windrow timing in canola.

The research aims to validate whether or not there is a penalty from windrowing at the wrong time.

Preliminary results indicate there could be a positive yield difference of about \$130 per hectare by moving from an early canola windrow timing to a later timing.

“This is more than most farmers made out of their canola crops in 2009 so the benefit could be huge,” he says.

This summer’s trials include analysing and quantifying the payback time for deep ripping.

Maurie says deep ripping is a very expensive practice but hard-setting soil can also be costly in reducing yields and increasing fuel costs and machinery wear and tear.

“GOA will also establish demonstration sites for herbicide alternatives to glyphosate – such as Sprayseed and paraquat, – for use in the fallow in order to help address the increasing issue of glyphosate resistance,” Maurie says.

GOA also ran a trial during the 2009 spring to quantify the yield response to aphid control in canola. Preliminary results shows some promise. ■



New GRDC-funded trials on windmill grass will shortly get underway in central west NSW.