Part 1 - Summary Details

Please use your TAB key to complete Parts 1 & 2.

CRDC Project Number: 1610
CGADawson Valley

Project Title: Sticky Beak Farm Tour

Project Commencement Date: 20 January 2016
Project Completion Date: 20 January 2016

Part 2 – Contact Details

Administrator: Simon Green – President DVCGA (0429063100)
Organisation: Dawson Valley Cotton Growers Association
Postal Address: P O Box 18, Theodore Q 4719
Ph: 0429063100 Fax: E-mail: sgreen_badminton@activ8.net.au

Part 3 – Final Report

(The points below are to be used as a guideline when completing your final report.)

Background
In recent years, the high level of activity required on-farm for cotton growers has resulted in a lack of time to network, both within the Dawson Valley and with growers and contacts outside the Valley. This networking provides a valuable opportunity for growers to not only socialise but also to learn from each other and view potentially new and innovative farming practices.

The Sticky Beak Tour was developed to address this omission and provide growers with the opportunity to view neighbouring cotton farms and potentially improve their own practices through information sharing. It is also an opportunity to re-invigorate their interest in the industry after some rather challenging seasons.

Objectives
1. List the project objectives (from the application) and the extent to which these have been achieved.

The objectives of the Sticky Beak tour were:
1. Showcase innovative farming practices that may benefit other growers;
2. Provide the opportunity for growers and industry representatives to view these practices and have the opportunity for discussion on the requirements and potential benefits whilst on-site;
3. Provide the opportunity for growers to meet socially and re-establish peer relationships that may have faltered due to the time constraints of several difficult seasons.

Specifically, the tour participants viewed:

- The effects of crop rotation on nematode infestations
- The benefits of zero till cotton planting into wheat stubble
- The development of previous grazing country into viable cultivation and the development of water storage and irrigation systems
- An in-depth analysis of the CDS variety trials by John Marshall of CSD
- Comparison of early to late planting of Bollgard II (plantings at the beginning of the planting window and at the end)
- Alternate PIX management strategies
- Different techniques of nitrogen split applications.

Methods
The Sticky Beak tour provided the participants to visit three progressive farms located within the Dawson Valley and to view the results of cotton management strategies on site.

The farms viewed on the tour were each chosen for their unique cotton practices.

The tour travelled in a bus, which enabled commentary on tour by each farms’ host as well as ongoing discussion between the participants. The close confines of the bus also engendered social interaction.

Outcomes
The outcomes of the Sticky Beak tour will be an increased awareness of alternative or innovative cotton farming methods. Whilst this cannot be measured in the short term, it is anticipated that the tour will assist growers to consider alternative or improved management practices.

The Dawson Valley cotton growers are already a cohesive industry grouping however activities such as the tour will assist in information sharing within the group. In addition, the participation in the tour by cotton industry representatives from Emerald and the Callide Valley has strengthened relationships between the areas and will result in increased collaborative activities.
2. Please report on any:-
   a) Feedback forms used and what the results were
   b) The highlights for participants or key learnings achieved
   c) The number of people participating and any comments on level of participation

22 growers and industry representatives attended the Sticky Beak Tour and all reported a high level of satisfaction with the event.

19 feedback surveys were received. (Some noted more than one category on their feedback forms hence many results do not collate at 100%)
89% reported that they found all of the farms visits to be the most worthy, however 16% noted the final farm visit which included the comparisons of early and late plant and PIX application to be the most valuable.

Comments regarding the range of farms included: Good Range of Properties; very good section of farms and sizes; I found it all quite enjoyable; Good to have the farmer and guest speaker on each farm; Seeing different setups on each farm.

Comments regarding suggested improvements included: Stick with the same formula. Bus and commentary along the way was great; Better air conditioning on bus; Better air conditioning on the bus. To drive around more growers; Make it a half day; Don’t have it too often; Very good overall.

Final comments from the survey participants were: Good day all round; Great day with good attendance. Well organized; It was a good day; Great day; Great day; Very good day; Should do it every year; Excellent day; Only a small area to get new things to look at; Yearly event; Was a good learning experience.

Budget
3. Describe how the project’s budget was spent in comparison with the application budget. Outline any changes and provide justification.

Please list expenditure incurred. *(Double click inside the table to enter the data)*

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Conclusion

4. Provide an assessment of the likely impact of the results and conclusions of the research project for the cotton industry. What are the take home messages?

The take home messages for the participants was that there is always something to learn and that to embrace innovation.

Extension Opportunities

5. Detail a plan for the activities or other steps that may be taken:
   (a) To tell other CGAs/growers/regions about your project.
   (b) To keep in touch with participants.
   (c) For future projects.

Based on the success of the Sticky Beak Tour, we plan to hold it annually with the potential for increasing the scope to include visits to other cotton growing areas. The benefit of having visitors from other cotton growing areas attend the Dawson Valley’s Sticky Beak tour has resulted in increased collaborations between the areas with local growers planning on attending a similar tour in Emerald (based on the success of the Dawson Valley tour) and potentially hosting a tour in the Callide Valley in future years.

The DVCGA maintains a database of all participants and communication, both formal and informal, between all the attendees has already been both forthcoming.