
The BestFarms Hat-trick

Three topical and informative workshops in three days is the latest achievement of the Blackwood Basin Group's BestFarms team.

As it continues to work with landholders in WA's southwest, the BestFarms team delivered three hugely successful workshops at the end of October focused on the timely topics of foliar management and water.

The workshop hat-trick kicked off in Darkan on October 27. Our keynote speaker and foliar expert Andrew VanderSluys engaged in lively discussion with workshop participants, which included landholders from many different areas of agriculture.

Soil health, participants learnt, relies on three components; biological, chemical and physical, and having each in equilibrium is pivotal to good soil health. The speaker focused on the crucial role microbes play in the soil. "Life has a brilliant energy and purpose of its own. Microbial activity has the potential to change and improve soils much more than anything else because it suits them well to do that," Andrew said.

The Water for the Future workshop in Boyup Brook on October 28 had a focus on all things water – water retention in soils, moving water through the landscape, water quality and monitoring, and water options on your property.

Local landholder Ted Willett said the Water for the Future workshop was well organised and presented a range of excellent speakers. "It gave us a good focus given the current season, and efficient water use is something we need to be more proactive with," Ted said.

With excellent guest speakers spread throughout the day, participants were then guided through testing their own water samples for pH, turbidity and saline levels, or led outside to do some brix foliar testing for sugar levels.

"[The day] improved my ability to understand the effects of soil management decisions," said workshop participant Geoffrey Pratt.

To complete the workshop hat-trick, BestFarms visited Mt Barker to present another Foliar Management workshop, where Andrew VanderSluys demonstrated how a good knowledge of plant and soil biology can improve the application and success of foliar sprays, and the features to look for when choosing a foliar spray. The workshop aimed to increase participants' understanding of soil nutritional requirements and factors contributing to foliar uptake.

After these three great workshops, the BestFarms team is now preparing for the next workshop to be held in **Denmark** on **November 22**. With water being more important than ever this year, we will be focusing on this resource with guest speakers on water quality and local catchment issues, harvest and storage of water and moisture retention in soils, while also providing a future climate snapshot. The workshop is free, includes morning tea, lunch and refreshments, and runs from 9am-3.30pm.

For further information about the workshops or to register your place, contact Felicity or Kathe on 9765 1555 or email to bestfarms@westnet.com.au



Andrew taking participants Shirley Blythe, Gordon Chester and Genevieve Harvey from the Mt Barker workshop through Brix testing.