Twin themes for 2005 Australian Cotton Trade Show

By David Dowling

There are two major themes running through the 2005 National Australian Cotton Trade Show, namely:

- 'Innovation in Irrigation'; and,
- 'Spray drift management.'

And this year, for the first time, the organisers have adopted an integrated approach that will see all aspects of these underlying themes explored through grower forums, industry seminars, interactive displays and demonstrations, and in association with all suppliers on site with an interest in that area. All exhibitors with new and innovative products and services related to the Trade Show themes will be identified on site with a special 'bright idea' symbol — the same symbol will also identify them in the official program.

"The main emphasis of the Cotton Trade Show will always be to provide growers with access to the widest range of industry suppliers and expose them to the latest in new technology and innovation," says Brian O'Connell, one of the Trade Show organisers. "Over the past eight years, this approach has been very successful and the Trade Show has grown to be the biggest annual event on the industry calendar.

"A natural progression of the Cotton Trade Show concept is to extend the information provision aspects of the event. While bringing 'cotton specific' buyers and sellers together remains the main aim, the event is also a great opportunity for researchers and extension people to present the latest information in their various fields — much of which relates to, and often underpins, the products and services on display anyway."

'Innovation in irrigation' and 'spray drift management' have necessarily become significant industry issues. Growers this year can expect to find these twin themes addressed in industry forums that will be complemented by a range of on-site displays and 'mini field days'.

INNOVATION IN IRRIGATION

Irrigation and cotton are virtually inseparable and each Trade Show has concentrated on some aspect of this nexus. This year, with invaluable support from the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) in association with the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), the focus is on the latest innovations in irrigation. And, yes, it is a fully integrated program.

On-farm field day

The irrigation focus will actually start on the day before the Trade Show with an Innovation in Irrigation field day organised by the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association and sponsored by the NHT.

At a conference in Adelaide last year, the NHT brought together 12 of the leading "Innovators in Irrigation" in Australia to tell their stories – with particular regard to the creative strategies they employed to ensure high productivity for every megalitre of water they use.

The case studies were designed to inspire and encourage fellow irrigators to develop the skills and knowledge needed for efficient and sustainable production and to help fully realise the exciting potential of Australia's irrigation future. The concept was so successful, the NHT is taking it 'on the road' to Moree and the cotton industry.

One of the 12 leading irrigators who told their story at the Adelaide conference was Andrew Parkes, manager at Keytah west of Moree. Andrew is known as one of the leading innovators in all aspects of cotton production and 'Keytah' has become synonymous with efficient, high yielding cotton farming with high levels of water use efficiency.

On Tuesday May 24, Andrew will be joined at a field day on Keytah by two other leading innovators:

- Dennis Moon, a tomato and wine grape producer from Rochester in Victoria; and,
- Rod Emerick who grows sweet corn and green beans in the Burdekin River Irrigation Area of north Queensland.

It is hoped that the field day will be addressed by the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Warren Truss — subject of course to the vagaries of parliamentary duties. The Minister's keenness to attend this event indicates the importance that is being placed on improved water use efficiency from a national perspective.

A good Trade Show begins with a good breakfast

On Wednesday May 25, the first morning of the Trade Show, DAFF/NHT will host an Innovation in Irrigation breakfast on-site. The breakfast will bring together leading cotton industry irrigators and decision makers in an informal setting. Entry to

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'Innovation in Irrigation' will be a major theme at the Trade Show.

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the breakfast will be by ticket only and numbers will be limited. Reservations for the breakfast will be available through cotton industry irrigator groups and from the Trade Show organisers.

Following breakfast, the 'Innovation in Irrigation' grower forum will be chaired by a senior official of DAFF. The three growers from the field day (Andrew Parkes, Dennis Moon and Rod Emerick) will also give a short recap of their innovations in the area of water use efficiency.

They will be joined by other speakers including:

- Irrigation consultant Jim Purcell who will cover a range of innovations in irrigation in Australia — especially the measurement of in-field application efficiency and storage volumes, evaporation and seepage losses.

The Trade Show will feature results of evaporation control studies.

- Professor Wayne Meyer, who will look at global innovations in irrigation. Wayne is an irrigation and crop scientist with CSIRO Land and Water and Chief Scientist with the CRC for Irrigation Futures.

Evaporation control: An Irrigation Pavilion feature

This year we have on-site an Irrigation Pavilion. This will be set up on the northern side of the BMC irrigation display dam. Included in the pavilion's features will be a recently completed National Centre for Engineering in Agriculture (NCEA) project on evaporation control systems. On the display dam itself will be some of the latest equipment for measuring storage volumes and seepage.

While the irrigation display area can be visited at any time, at least once per day there will be a 'mini field day' at this site. Speakers will be on hand to detail the results of the evaporation control project as well as demonstrating the storage monitoring equipment. The times of the mini field day will be advertised in the official program.

The mini field day approach will also be used to address aspects of the Trade Show's other major theme — drift management.

DRIFT CONTROL SOLUTIONS

Despite the efforts of many people and organisations to tackle this issue, herbicide drift problems — both onto and from cotton farms — still seem to occur with what is fast becoming alarming regularity. Controlling spray drift is both possible and necessary — but the solution involves a lot of cooperation and a lot of education.

The National Australian Cotton Trade Show is proud to support the concept of responsible spray application in 2005.

Thursday Forum: Spray drift management

The grower forum on Thursday, May 26 will concentrate on spray drift management. Speakers will include:

The CASE Cotton Club: A networker's heaven

The National Australian Cotton Trade Show is already recognised as a great networking opportunity — attracting over 1700 cottongrowers, their staff, and consultants from all cotton producing areas to meet with more than 230 cotton specific exhibitors.

This year the networking will be enhanced with the introduction of the CASE Cotton Club Pavilion. The concept was trialed at the 2004 ACGRA Cotton Conference on the Gold Coast and there was no doubt it was a winner.

Visitors to the Trade Show will be able to meet and talk in comfort in the Cotton Club lounge with coffee and bar service facilities. And, as at the Gold Coast, exhibitors will have access to a limited number of sites strategically located around the lounge area.

Access to bar and food services, together with room to accommodate guests, makes this facility ideal for new company and product launches — several exhibitors have flagged their intention to take up this opportunity.

These sites are proving popular with exhibitors from all industry sectors – over 70 per cent of the available sites have been taken up at the time of writing with over two months still to go until the event.

The Case Cotton Club was a big success at the 2004 Cotton Conference.

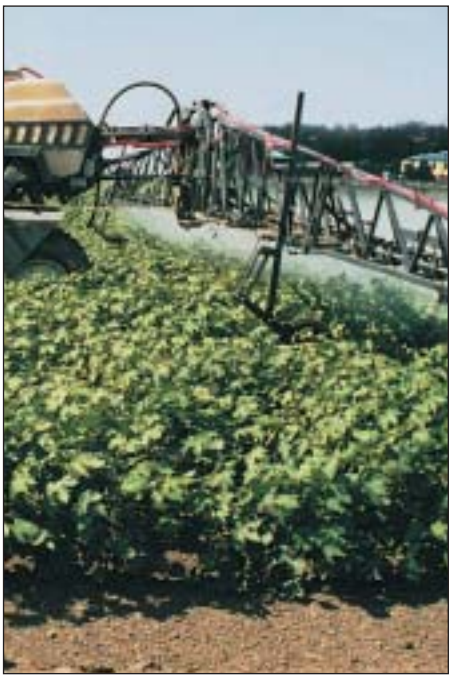
- Consultant Graham Betts. Graham has been a voice in the wilderness for many years as he promotes spray application education. His topic will be "Plan the spray and spray the plan."
- Graham Tepper from the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) in Melbourne will explain how and why drift ends up where it does when he speaks about "Weather influences on spraying". He will be accompanied by Julie Evan, also from the BOM, who will explain how to "Read the radar".
- A mixed cropping farmer from central Queensland will provide a case study account of their progression from litigation, to mediation, and now education, in response to spray drift incidents.
- Other speakers will look at legal issues, trace back systems and chemical modes of action.

Drift management display and demos

On the northern side of the trade show site, just across from the Irrigation Pavilion will be the new Drift Management Pavilion. Immediately adjacent to the pavilion will be an extensive spray application demonstration area.

Independent spray consultants Graham Betts and Bill Gordon will be on hand to demonstrate how factors such as ground speed, nozzle selection, and weather monitoring can be managed to deliver a good spray job.

Included in the display will be examples of cotton and other plants affected by overspray from a number of herbicide products at a range of rates. This will assist growers in determining if plant damage in the field is indeed a drift problem.



The solution to drift is in our hands.

Each year the Trade Show organisers are faced with the task of maintaining the unique industry focus that underpins the success of this event. And each year growers and exhibitors throw out the challenge of "what do you do next?"

We believe that the success of this industry as a whole is underpinned by the industry's thirst for information. We also believe that this progression into improved information delivery at the trade show has a good feel and is a good fit. The 2005 National Australian Cotton Trade Show will be held at the Moree TAFE Agricultural Centre site on Wednesday, May 25 and Thursday, May 26.

For more information, call Brian O'Connell (02 6778 3255) or David Dowling (07 46593555).