



OCTOBER 2020

**Bushfire Recovery
Community Newsletter**



COVID-19 update

As of Tuesday 11.59pm 27 October 2020 Victoria is in Third Step restrictions.

For information on current community and business/industry restrictions across Victoria, and on the Coronavirus (COVID-19) roadmap to reopening, visit

vic.gov.au/roadmap

Support for community members and businesses

A range of support measures are available to help the Cardinia Shire community cope with the impacts of COVID-19. There is also support for community groups, sporting groups and local businesses.

For more information on support available via the Community and Business Support Package call 1300 787 624

cardinia.vic.gov.au/coronavirus

Masks

Currently as of 11 November 2020 fitted face masks are still mandatory when leaving home (children under 12 years old are exempt)

Vulnerable community members can access free face masks via a number of local pharmacies and stores across Cardinia Shire. For DHHS eligibility criteria and collection points visit the Council website.

cardinia.vic.gov.au/coronavirus

Alternatively, if you meet the requirements you can email recovery@cardinia.vic.gov.au to request a mask. Please include your name and postal address.

Recovery centre

Unfortunately our Bushfire Recovery Centre remains closed due to COVID-19.

The Recovery Team is developing a COVID-19 safe version of the Bushfire Recovery Centre and soon we hope to be out engaging with the community safely.

In the meantime, we encourage the community to use the Bushfire Recovery Group - Tonimbuk Hall Facebook community page to connect and share.

To find the group, search for the name Bushfire Recovery Group - Tonimbuk Hall on Facebook and request to join.



Latest news


Business and farm strengthening program

In collaboration with Small Business Victoria and West Gippsland Progress Association the Recovery team will be facilitating a series of helpful sessions about:

- lost trade and bushfire recovery cost – short- to medium-term cash flow
- recovery investment – prioritisation, viability, funding options, cash flow forecasting
- managing complex business recovery situations and off-farm employment – multiple operations and income sources
- peri-urban family farming and business activity

These sessions are free and available for any business owner, farmer or individual looking to start a business.

To register:

 www.trybooking.com/BMFGX

Please note participants do not have to sign up for all sessions.

For any queries regarding the Business and Farm Strengthening Program please don't hesitate to email Darryl Brooke at D.Brooke@cardinia.vic.gov.au


Workshop	Recovery focus area	Date	Time
Building resilience: how to prepare for business challenges	Living through family recovery and business recovery at the same time	Thursday 5 November	7-9.30pm
Business planning essentials: how to build a roadmap to success	Managing recovery across multiple business operations and priorities	Thursday 12 November	7-9.30pm
Finance fundamentals: how to keep cash flowing	Managing short-to medium-term cash flow	Thursday 19 November	7-9.30pm
Marketing your business: how to get it right the first time	Targeted marketing, communications and evaluation	Thursday 26 November	7-9.30pm
Taking your business online: what you need to know	New sales channels and market communications	Thursday 3 December	7-9.30pm
Selling or succession planning - how to exit successfully	Business valuation and viability	Thursday 10 December	7-9.30pm
Starting your small business: how to make it happen	Starting something new during recovery	Thursday 17 December	6.30-10pm

Equine webinar - managing run off and mud on horse properties by Dr Mariette van den Berg

This webinar is designed to support horse property owners with educational information on:

- mud and related health problems for horses
- 10 ways to manage run-off and mud on your property
- rainwater run-off and infiltration on properties
- various other horse property questions

Registration is required and once you have registered, participants will receive an email containing the webinar link.

 www.trybooking.com/669587

Any questions regarding the webinar please email: recovery@cardinia.vic.gov.au

Latest news

One-on-one on-farm consultations

Agriculture recovery services are available from Agriculture Victoria including on-farm one-on-one consultations by appointment and information resources on a range of post-fire agricultural recovery issues.

To register your interest in a one-on-one on-farm consultation,

Completed forms can be sent to your case manager, emailed to lindsay.hyde@agriculture.vic.gov.au or posted to:

Lindsay Hyde
Agriculture Victoria
4 Archer Drive
Mornington 3931

Operate and maintain chainsaws course – AHCMOM213

Gain the skills and knowledge required to safely operate a hand-held chainsaw and maintain it in working condition. The program is designed for cross-cutting fallen timber using safe cutting techniques.

Date: Saturday 14 November 2020
(dependent on restrictions in place at the time)

Time: 9am – 1pm

Venue: 110 Gardner and Holman Road, Drouin Vic 3818

Cost: Subsidised cost of \$60 per person

Course numbers are strictly limited. Please email recovery@cardinia.vic.gov.au or telephone 0436 836 094

Nominations closing soon for Australia Day Awards

Time is running out to nominate your local heroes for Cardinia Shire Council's 2021 Australia Day Awards.

Nominations must be received by 5pm Friday 13 November 2020.

Nominations can be made online in the following award categories:

- Citizen of the Year
- Senior Citizen of the Year
- Young Citizen of the Year
- Community Event of the Year

Nominees must be Australian citizens and live within Cardinia Shire. They must have made a noteworthy contribution during the current year.

Nominees for Young Citizen of the Year must be 25 years of age or younger on 26 January 2021.

Nominees for Senior Citizen of the Year must be at least 70 years of age on 26 January 2021.

Community events must have been hosted onsite or virtually in the shire between November 2019 and November 2020 by a not-for-profit organisation. Previous award winners are ineligible to win an award in the same category for at least 5 years.

For more information, visit

cardinia.vic.gov.au/australiaday



Tell us how you 'Imagine Cardinia!'

Share your thoughts and ideas to help us develop the Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Council Budget.

We are developing these plans to help guide Council's strategic direction over the coming years and this is your chance to get involved, have your say and make a difference.

The current round of consultation opens from 16 November and closes on 23 December 2020.

Help create the future of your shire. For more information visit

cardinia.vic.gov.au/imaginecardinia





Latest news

Weed control grants

The 2020-21 Weed Control Grants are now open.

Weed control grants are available to help landowners and community groups control noxious and environmental weeds on private property, both in agricultural areas and areas of high environmental value.

Funding is available for the following categories of approved weed control works:

- purchasing herbicide (maximum \$250, or \$500 for community groups)
- disposing of weed material, i.e. tip passes or skip hire (maximum \$200)
- hiring of equipment, for example sprayers, mulchers etc (maximum \$250)
- hiring contractors (maximum \$250)

Receipts submitted for reimbursement must be dated in this current financial year.

If your receipts do not meet the criteria no refund will be given.


You will be notified by email of the outcome within two weeks of submitting your application.


Receipts and progress report/payment request forms must be submitted via Smarty Grants in order to be reimbursed by Council.

We will do a random audit of properties to ensure compliance with the requirements of the grant program.

Please note eligibility criteria does apply.

For more information about how to apply and the criteria visit Cardinia Shire Council website.

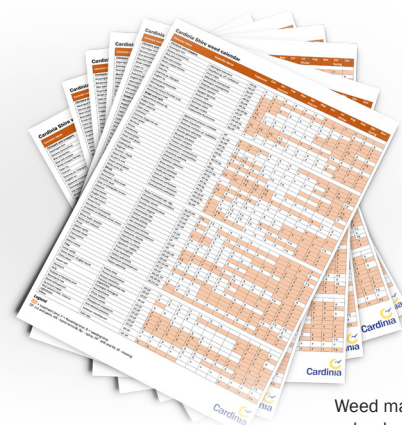
 cardinia.vic.gov.au/weedgrants

 cardinia.vic.gov.au/weeds

Tips for removing weeds

- where possible, choose non-chemical methods of weed control
- if the weed spreads by seed, consider the most appropriate way to remove the weed without spreading seeds
- think about how you will dispose of the weeds. Never dump your garden waste on roadsides or reserves as this can cause weed spread and invasion.
- make sure you have the right tools and safety equipment.

More information about removing weeds and a weed management calendar can be found on Cardinia Shire website.



Weed management calendar

Latest news

New online business portal

'Cardinia Business' is a new, interactive online portal to support local business in Cardinia Shire, and for the Cardinia Shire community to show their support for local businesses.

The portal's 'Buy Local' map helps people find local businesses that are still operating during the pandemic, or getting ready to do so.

For local businesses: it's easy to put your business on the map, and because your listing is linked to your business' Facebook page, it updates automatically.

For residents: give a shout out to your favourite local businesses by posting a recommendation or photo.

It also has information on support available to businesses and links to essential business information, all in the one place.

cardinia.vic.gov.au/cardiniabusiness

Upcoming bushfire season

Summer is just around the corner and many residents will be preparing their property in case of an emergency.

To prepare your property make sure to:

- slash all grass and weeds on your block so they are less than 10 centimetres high. Make sure you maintain this length during the fire danger period.
- clear fallen branches and dead vegetation from around your property.
- clean up fine fuels such as leaves, twigs and long grass and remove any rubbish.
- larger rural and agricultural properties need to create a firebreak at least 10 metres wide along external fences by slashing grass and weeds to less than 10 centimetres.

Before you begin preparing your property you may need a planning permit to remove vegetation in certain circumstances and to also burn off. Make sure to contact Council and discuss whether you require a permit to proceed.

Fire danger period

The upcoming fire danger period is soon approaching (most likely to be declared early December).

This means any burning off is NOT permitted

Fire hazard inspection program

Fire prevention officers inspect properties in the lead up to summer and during the Fire danger period to check if there are fire hazards that need to be addressed on private land.

If the Fire Prevention Officers inspect a property and find fire hazards, a Fire Prevention Notice is issued to the property owner. The notice outlines the works that must be done to fix the issue.

Properties most likely to be inspected include:

- those in high fire risk areas
- vacant properties
- properties that have previously been issued with a Fire Prevention Notice.

If you receive a fire prevention notice, read it carefully. Make sure the works take place by the date stated in the notice.

After this date, the land will be re-inspected to see if the fire hazards identified in the notice have been fixed.

If you do not comply with the notice, you may be fined up to \$1,611, and/or you may need to cover the cost of us hiring a contractor to remove fire hazards, plus administration costs. Legal action may still proceed.

If you have any questions regarding the upcoming fire season and preparing for the upcoming season contact 1300 787 624

cardinia.vic.gov.au/FHIP

cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare



Latest news

Wellbeing Wednesdays

Every Wednesday at 1pm via the Bushfire Recovery Group - Tonimbuk Hall Facebook Page Wellbeing Wednesdays sessions have been occurring with Crystal McDonald (Recovery Officer) and Katerina Volney from Monash Health.

Each session Crystal and Karina have been discussing mental health and recovery journey through Facebook Live to help answer questions from residents and provide any resources necessary.

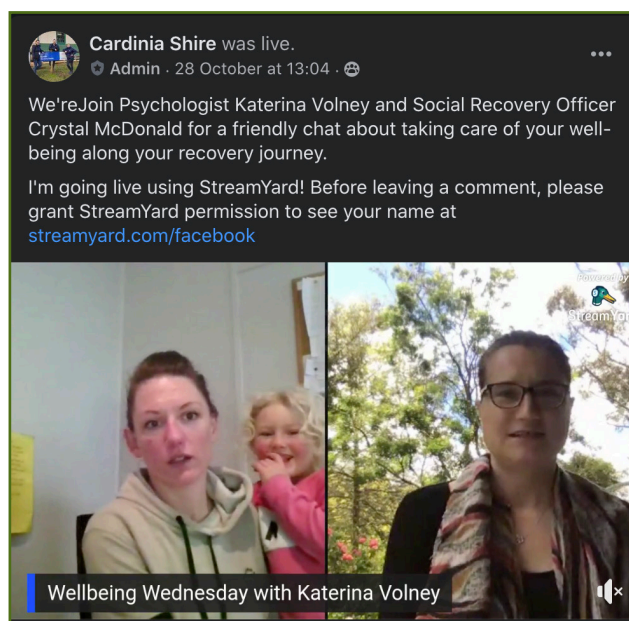
So far Wellbeing Wednesday session have discussed topics such as sleep, emotional intelligence, mindfulness, self-compassion and general mental health.

All the Wellbeing Wednesday Sessions are still available via the Bushfire Recovery Group - Tonimbuk Hall Facebook Page.

www.facebook.com/groups/279666166259256/

If you have any questions or topics that you would like discussed during Well-being Wednesday sessions just email Crystal McDonald.

C.McDonald@cardinia.vic.gov.au



Renovation of damaged pastures and soils; compaction is the key problem on horse properties

By Dr Mariette van den Berg (MB Equine Services & Equine Permaculture)

Article adapted from the original publication in the Horses & People magazine

Horses compact ground, and they especially love to do so in the corners of paddocks. When soils are compacted by hooved animals, rainwater is unable to infiltrate the ground through the compaction layer and grass roots cannot open up the soil. This leads to the next symptoms; can't get grass to grow, an increase in weeds, erosion, water-logging and mud ... In addition, when soils are severely compacted it will significantly reduce oxygen availability (anaerobic) and most of your soil organisms such as dung beetles, worms and beneficial bacteria and fungi will disappear.

This can lead to the growth of bad (anaerobic) bacteria, which can be harmful to you and your horses. Therefore, the number 1 problem you need to work on is typically compaction and the rest will follow (with a bit of help!). In this article we will discuss in more detail what compaction is, how can we decompact soils through biological and mechanical management and how property design and pasture planning can help reduce these problems in the future.

Compaction

Compaction occurs when a force compresses the soil and pushes air and water out of it so that it becomes denser. Compaction is more severe when the soil is wet and less able to withstand compression. The most common causes of compaction on properties are vehicles, heavy

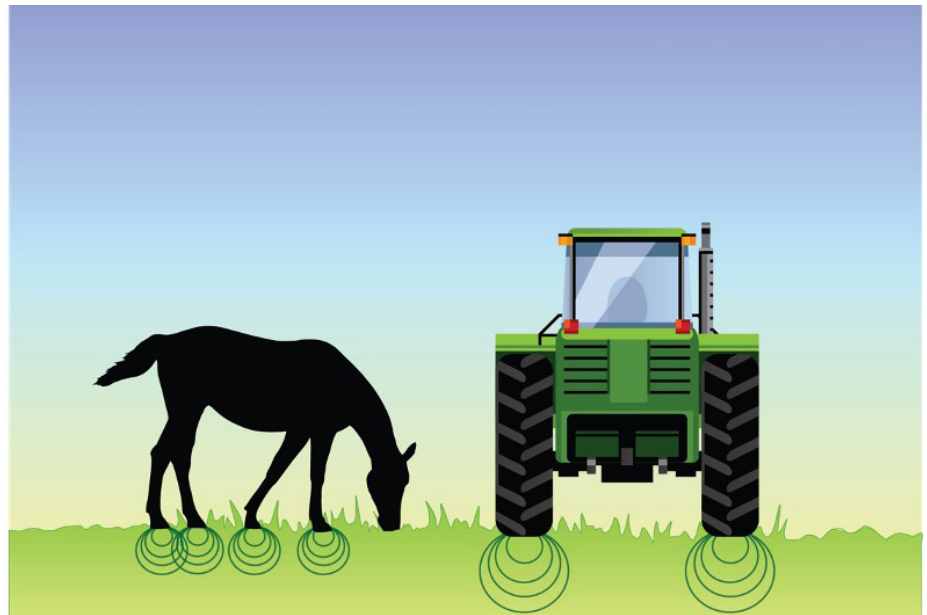


Figure 1. Heavy vehicles and grazing animals contribute to compaction of soil. Illustration source: www.horsesandpeoplemagazine.com.au

machinery and animals (traffic). The degree of compaction depends on the force of compressing the soil, the strength of the soil, soil type and contact area. For example heavy machinery will compact the soil more deeply, whereas lighter vehicles and animal hooves compact the soil directly underneath and around the contact area. While horses and cattle are both large grazing herbivores, it appears that horses have a larger impact on soil due to the morphology of their hooves and being more active. Still any hooved animal can cause compaction, as it is not only the weight and hoof shape but also the time of (re)exposure to the soil that will determine the severity of the compaction.

How do I tell if my soil is compacted?

Compaction is typically visible where animals congregate. However, at times you may not see it in the middle of the pasture as it often occurs in a layer below the soil surface. The simplest way to check if you have

compaction problem is to push a steel rod or large screwdriver into the ground. If you can't push it very far your soil may be compacted or very dry. Another way is to use a shovel and try to dig a 25-30 cm deep hole. As you dig it will become obvious if it's easy or difficult to penetrate the soil layers. Compacted soil shows up as a hard solid layer with large, deformed aggregates. The soil above it is usually looser and separates quite easily to expose the smooth surface of the compacted section. The compacted soil is often arranged into horizontal layers, giving a platy structure. You may see plant roots growing horizontally along the top of the compacted layer because they cannot grow through it. In addition, most of the time you will see colour differences. The compacted layers will have no organic matter and will have a paler colour or even orange. The top layer may still be brown, but will also show reduced organic matter. Typically severely compacted soils also lack topsoil (due to erosion and reduced plant growth).

Other pasture and land issues

Compaction negatively affects the soil structure in your pasture. 'Soil structure' refers to the arrangement, size and shape and proportion of stable soil aggregates (or peds) in the soil profile. When the soil structure breaks down it leads to restricted root growth, reducing the uptake of water and nutrients by plants. It lowers the average soil pore size, affecting the water-holding capacity of the soil and the activity levels of soil microorganisms. It also reduces infiltration rates, increasing the likelihood of surface run-off, water erosion and surface ponding (and mud).

You often find that your favorable pasture species can't grow in these compacted soil areas, but instead you get weeds. Weeds are non-native, or immigrant, species — and hardworking ones at that! They often have large taproots that can penetrate soil layers to obtain water or they may have very shallow roots and have a creeping nature on the soil surface. A few common indicator species that tell you that you have compaction are: thistles, dandelions, dock, chicory, crabgrass, plantain, clover and knotweed.

De-compacting soil

Extremely compacted grounds are impossible to de-compact naturally unless we use weeds to do the hard work for us! Yes, you read that correctly, "the problem is also the solution"! In a way if you let nature do its thing, you find that these species would invade this niche and "repair" the land by naturally de-compacting it. By succession and decay of the plant and roots you find that this opens up the spaces in the soil, allowing oxygen and water back into the deeper layers. They add biomass and build soil, which becomes a new fertile niche for other species such as your grasses that thrive in richer soil conditions. So how can you help nature and de-compact your soils?



Building soil by encouraging the breakdown of organic material, including weeds high in accumulated minerals, is a natural means of restoring horse pasture health. Weeds with deep, thick tap-roots are the only ones that can grow in hard, compacted soils, and we can use these to fast-track our pasture management and build soil.

If paddocks are slashed before the weeds seed, the weeds die. The roots in the ground also die and break down, allowing air and moisture to penetrate deeply and adding organic matter high in minerals to the soil. This process can be repeated several times. Many weeds adapt themselves to growing in poor soil and accumulate the very minerals that the soil is lacking. Therefore, it is important to instigate a system using weeds. Once the soil biology and minerals are restored, weeds are 'out-competed' by grasses.

A fast way to de-compact and regenerate horse pastures and paddocks is by using mechanical techniques such as an 'aerator'. These

machines will either remove plugs of soil from the ground or will puncture the ground and give the topsoil room to decompress, allowing water and oxygen back into the soil layer. You can buy/rent these for tractors or ATV and quad bikes.

For severely compacted soils and a more advanced approach to "aeration" you can consider deep-ripping techniques using a Yeomans Keyline Plow or a Wallace Plow. These machines deep-rip (not cultivate) the pasture with a chisel plough shank that slices, lifts the soil, and closes after the pass of the plod. The Yeomans Keyline Plow utilises a special deep-ripping technique to infiltrate water into the soil efficiently and hold it on the land as long as possible. It's almost as though the ground is able to take a deep breath, allowing moisture and oxygen in.

The first shallow rip with the Keyline Plow allows roots to break through the first compaction layer. Second season, the pass goes deeper again and the roots follow. The final pass is to a depth of approximately 24 inches (600 mm) (see figure 2).

By slicing the soil, you create spaces for grasses to establish and reach into the ground water levels. In addition, grasses can now start to work with soil bacteria and fungi to access deep minerals, which are essential for grazing animals. You can even add a liquid compost (tea) or biofertiliser and grass/legume seeds to the rip lines to speed up your pasture restoration following the key line process. Over three to four passes with the yeomans keyline plow, and using keyline Design (pattern of plowing), you can effectively de-compact soil, increase soil carbon, build soil, increase water-holding capacity, increase soil life in the soil food web, and even drought-proof your land.

Mulching and fertiliser

We have already mentioned the slashing of weeds, which creates mulch, builds soil and adds minerals. Mulching (of weeds and old grass) will also help with covering bare soil and retaining moisture (reducing evaporation). Using mulch can be particularly beneficial for your bare/compacted patches in the pasture. You can use old hay and/or straw as mulch and add compost or manure to restore these areas in your pasture.

This works well for smaller compacted areas, such as corners and boundary tracks, but can also be done for larger areas of pastures, around water points or on slopes. Add a thin layer of mulch first, which is your carbon part, followed by a thin layer of compost or manure (fertiliser) and then top it with another layer of hay/straw. Its important that you wet it down, which is needed for the decay process and will also avoid the top layer from being blown away with the wind (clearly try to avoid extreme windy days to do this job!).

You may have to repeat the watering for a couple of days until it's set in (and depending on rain). You can even add some pasture/legume seeds to speed up the growth and restoration. The best time for recovery is during the growing seasons. But even in winter your bare soils will benefit from this mulching process as you avoid further erosion and build organic matter before Spring starts.

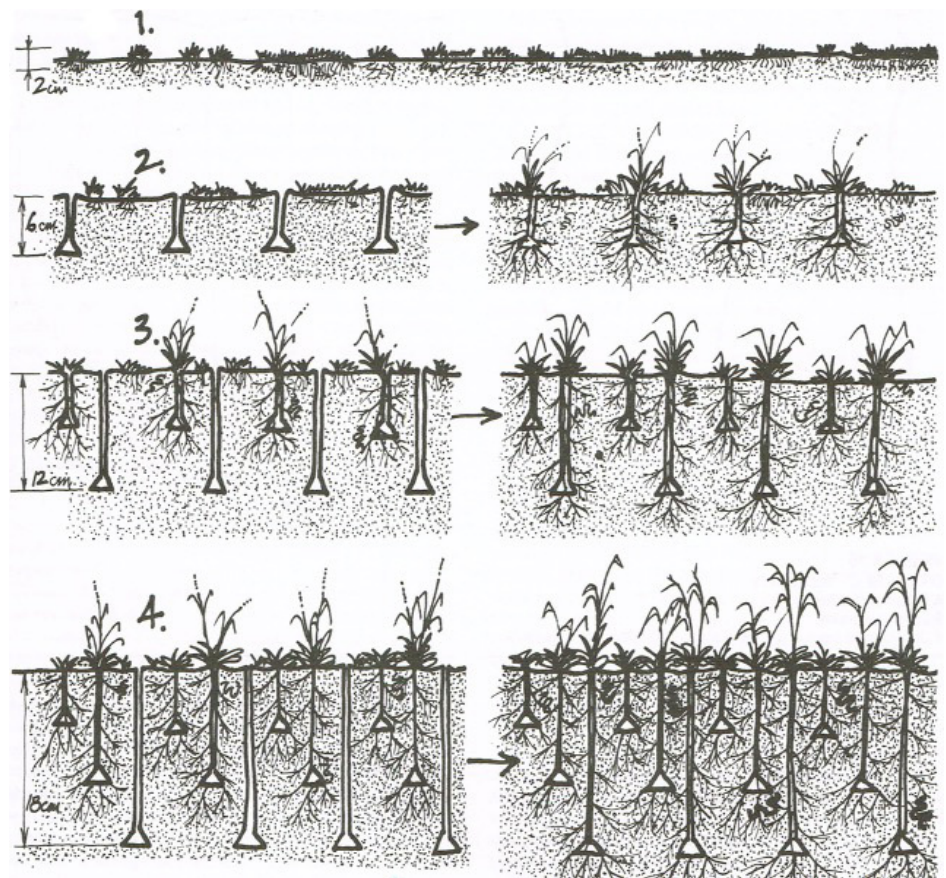


Figure 2. Deeping ripping diagram

Reduce compaction in pastures

To aid soil and pasture recovery it is important that you remove horses from the paddock or fence the area off that you're working on. Once the pasture has been restored and you have enough pasture availability for grazing you can return horses. To reduce further compaction on your property it's essential that you review your property design and pasture (rotational) planning. This will also help with reducing compaction. Understandably we will never fully avoid compaction along boundaries, water and feeding points, but by timely grazing and moving animals frequently this compaction is less severe and can be easily restored using mulching techniques or just recovery time if you have healthy soils to start with.

Another solution is to use track and sacrifice/central point systems that can take some of the regular congregating of animals. As the word is suggesting, this is an area that you sacrifice for pasture/ plant growth and clearly allow compaction. Typically these systems are used to provide a central space for water, feeding or to move horses off pasture for plant recovery or reducing pasture intake. The design of your sacrifice/ central points will largely depend on the number of horses, space available and budget. While you allow compaction to happen in these areas it is important that you pay close attention to the drainage and footing of these areas so you avoid mud build up which can be very dangerous for you and your horses. You will need to look at the shape of the land and review if you need to level and prepare this area



in such a way that it allows water to slowly be drained without causing quick run off (and erosion). The sacrifice area will need to be fenced off and requires a border around the footing to avoid run off. You can even build a (rock) rain garden that can take some of the extra run off water (kind of like a mini swale!).

There are many types of materials that can be used as footing and your choice will largely depend on your preferences, availability, and budget. River sand, pea rock gravel, and wood chips are regularly used for their comfort and/or price and can be applied to different areas. You can even decide to use ground stabilising products such as plastic pavers with a cell-like structure (honeycomb or diamond). Typically sand or pea rock can be used to fill the grid spaces and this will allow water to pass through, without making it into a muddy area. This system can be very useful for high impact areas such as gateways, tracks and water points. However, it still needs to be managed and manure should be taken away regularly to avoid build up that can turn into a slurry.

Summary

This article has shed some light on the most common pasture problems; weeds, erosion, and water-logging, which are only just symptoms of the key problem which is soil compaction! If you tackle soil compaction, you will eliminate most of the other pasture related issues on your property. By using biological and mechanical tools we can restore soil health and manage pastures. Further we can set up specific treatment in areas that are able to support the impact of animal trampling, either by using a footing around water and feeding points or building a track and central point system where you allow animals to congregate. In the next article we discuss in more detail how to keep these areas mud free. Stay tuned!

Locals are calling it WGPA – Who is the West Gippsland Progress Association?

The WGPA purpose is to increase prosperity for the local economies of Nar Nar Goon to Longwarry and the adjoining areas. WGPA will engage local businesses and key community organisations through partnerships to develop and execute plans which enhance the local economy. It will provide a forum which enhances small business development and mentoring opportunities with an initial focus on food and tourism industry projects.

What has been done so far?

Representatives from all the key community organisations have formed an advisory committee and are going through incorporation as association. All are welcome.

WGPA is reaching out to communities in that rural sweet spot bordering Cardinia and Baw Baw, an area rich in rural treasures and at Melbourne's front door.

A food industry working group has identified three priority developments that will most help farmers from the area prosper. Three illustrations captured the working group's discussions on farmer collaboration ideas. Expect outcomes that can lift farming practices across the area and deliver produce to an urban market hungry for brands that care.

Starting in November, WGPA will use a similar working group to identify what will most help our tourism businesses. The prospect of local food trails and uncovering our hidden visitor gems is exciting.

Every small business operator can benefit from Small Business Victoria business workshops coming in November and December. And we have a new mentoring system coming for farmers and business owners connecting experienced local people with others their experience can help.

WGPA is partnering with Cardinia Shire Council's Bushfire Recovery Team to work on a long-lasting recovery effort.

Contact Darryl Brooke at D.Brooke@cardinia.vic.gov.au



Business renewal

Business and farm recovery and renewal services

Council's Economic Recovery Officer Daryl Brooke is here to help fire-affected businesses and farmers who are now being further impacted by COVID-19.

d.brooke@cardinia.vic.gov.au

0433 948 258.

Short-term assistance

- dealing with short-term cash flow or operational problems
- help pivoting your business to products and customers better suiting these times
- assessing new industry opportunities
- referrals to appropriate professional help
- ask to be included on our Friday's Business weekly email

Longer term assistance

- assessing new business ideas
- 2022 and beyond business plans
- evaluating new and better business models and methods
- ask about our work with your West Gippsland Progress Association on food, tourism and small business industries.

COVID-19 help for fire-impacted farms and businesses

- Australian Government support

Use this website for current commonwealth support options: business.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19/business-support/Coronavirus-COVID-19-business-support-and-financial-assistance-finder

- Victorian Government support

Use this website for current state support options:

business.gov.au/Risk-management/Emergency-management/Coronavirus-information-and-support-for-business



Support services

Monash Health: provide specialist counselling for individuals of any age and families, either 1:1 or as a family.

Free for fire-affected community members.

Call: 9796 1500

Windermere: case workers available at the recovery centre or email bushfirerecovery@windermere.org.au or phone 1300 946 337

There are a number of other organisations that offer free counselling and personal support. Many operate 24 hours/7 days a week:

Lifeline:	131 114, telephone counselling, information and referral service (24-hour)
BeyondBlue:	1300 224 636 Information on depression and anxiety
Kids Help Line:	1800 551 800 Confidential phone counselling for young people aged 5–25 years.
Headspace:	1800 650 890
ParentLine:	132 289 Counselling and information for families with children up to 18 years old
Men's Line Australia:	1300 789 978, 24-hour counselling (24-hour)
Safe Steps Family Violence Support:	1800 015 188
Family Violence support:	Call 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) (confidential) or go to vic.gov.au/familyviolence