



Adapt your sleep habits

Callers jammed the phone lines and the fax ran out of paper. Sam and Jenny were married in 1999 and they now help run the family farm.

Sam was featured on ABC TV's *Australian Story* in 2000, and again in follow-up stories in 2004 and 2006. His story is now available in book form. *Head Over Heels – A Story of tragedy, triumph and romance in the Australian Bush* was published this year by ABC Books and is now a best seller.

Today Sam is also in demand as a speaker, inspiring people across Australia. He delivers powerful messages about how to overcome adversity and achieving the 'impossible'. But he hasn't given up on his childhood dreams. He continues to live and work on the farm at Croppa Creek, in between speaking engagements. ■

The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

WINSTON CHURCHILL

Have you ever thought how much of your life you spend sleeping? On average people spend about a third of their life asleep. Having a long, healthy, uninterrupted sleep is a basic human need like eating and breathing. Without rest your body doesn't know how to function properly. Having enough quality sleep is vital to your emotional and physical wellbeing.

IMPROVING YOUR SLEEP

There are a number of things you can do to improve your sleep.

When you wake up in the morning

- Get out of bed as soon as you wake. Don't go back to sleep or try to make up for 'lost sleep'.
- Try to get up at the same time each morning, for example, around 7-7.30am.
- Go outside for some fresh air.
- Do some physical activity e.g. go for a walk.

During the day

- Don't nap. If you do you'll be less tired when you go to bed and you'll probably take longer to fall asleep.
- If you're worrying about things during the night, set aside some time for problem-solving during the day. Identify problems that are causing you stress and solve them using Structured Problem-Solving (see beyondblue Fact Sheet 10).
- During the day, try to be physically active.
- Avoid drinking caffeine after 4pm and try not to drink more than two cups of caffeine-type drinks each

day e.g. coffee, strong tea, cola or energy drinks.

Before going to bed

- Avoid going to bed too early – it isn't the right time for 'deep sleep'.
- Go to bed at around 10 to 10.30pm.
- Avoid using alcohol to help you sleep. As the alcohol is broken down in your body, it causes you to sleep less deeply and to wake more frequently.
- Don't smoke within an hour or two of going to bed. Smoking stimulates your nervous system.
- Don't go to bed hungry or with a full bladder.
- Regular exercise can improve your sleep, but avoid vigorous exercise late in the evening.
- Allow yourself time to wind down before going to bed. If you are working or studying, stop at least 30 minutes before bedtime and do something relaxing.
- Use your bed only for sleep and sex so that you learn to associate your bed with sleep.
- Avoid taking sleeping pills. If you do need to take sleeping pills, try not to take them for more than a week as they can be addictive.

While you sleep

- Try to make your bedroom quiet, dim and cool.
- Avoid too many blankets and electric blankets. If you're too hot, you won't go into 'deep sleep'.

OVERCOMING LONG-TERM SLEEPING PROBLEMS

For some people, sleeping problems may last for weeks, months or even years. Not surprisingly this may lead to anxiety about getting to sleep, which in turn makes the problem even worse.

It can be helpful to take specific steps to break the cycle of feeling anxious and restless in bed. Below are some steps to follow when you can't get to sleep.

1. Get up if you can't sleep after trying for 15-20 minutes.
2. Do something quiet and distracting e.g. read, knit or enjoy a warm bath.
3. Go back to bed when you feel more relaxed and sleepy.
4. If you're still awake after a further 15-20 minutes, get out of bed again. Repeat this process until you fall asleep shortly after returning to bed.

Information from beyondblue Sleeping Well Fact Sheet 7. For this and more Fact Sheets go to: www.beyondblue.org.au and click on the 'resources' link.

Australia's rural and regional communities now have online access to agricultural information for dryland and broadacre farming in their area, and nationally, at the click of a mouse.

The National Agricultural Monitoring System (NAMS) website is a single information source that provides current climate and production information. For the first time, farmers in more than 600 regions around Australia can get information about rainfall, production information, temperature profiles and economic performance analyses from the one source.

The Bureau of Rural Sciences developed NAMS in collaboration with governments, industry and scientists. It currently focuses on broadacre grazing and cropping, and will be expanded in the next year to cover irrigated industries such as dairy and horticulture.

While the system's main purpose is to assist in streamlining the Exceptional Circumstances application and assessment processes, it also makes information more readily available to help farmers prepare more effectively for events such as drought.

For more information go to: www.nams.gov.au



Adaptive management at work on the farm

By Trudy Glasgow, Public Affairs Manager, NSW Department of Primary Industries

Gary Johnston runs a mixed irrigation property in the Lachlan Valley near Forbes with his wife Rosie and children Sam and Claudia. Originally from a dairy farm at Camden, Gary took over 'Merriment' when he was 17 years old. Gary believes one of the keys to successful farm management, particularly during times of drought, is remaining flexible in your production mix. He believes this enables you to better match your production to market demand and make the best use of current seasonal conditions and key resources such as water.

'We grow stock feed and lucerne for grazing. We turn over between 6,000 and 10,000 lambs per annum and up to five or six hundred steers. We also breed around a hundred cattle a year.

'When we've got plenty of water we grow winter wheats, which we graze with the lambs and then harvest or cut for hay. We grow sweet corn if we can get a contractor and there's sufficient irrigation

water in the Valley and we also grow barley and oaten hay.

'I'd say our management style is adaptive and evolving – we always look at how we can improve what we're doing. We're obviously focused on production and we always like to follow our products through to the market, so we like to be vertically integrated and we like to brand as well.'

Even though Gary originally came from a dairy cattle background, he decided early on not to build a dairy on Merriment, but to instead develop its cropping potential.

He takes a wholistic approach to the farm's management, which includes both long and short term plans for what is produced, always retaining a degree of flexibility.

'We looked at Merriment as something we wanted to deliver a good productive base with a sustainable irrigation system, so we started off preparing a whole farm plan.

'Part of the plan was putting in laneways with trees and

channels and high flow delivery systems, with good tail water recirculation.

'We planted areas of 50 to 100 hectares for a number of years and then started to implement the tree planting program. We're now growing lucerne for stockfeed and garden products and grazing prime lamb and cattle.'

Gary employs two farm workers full-time and also encourages his family to take an active role in keeping the property sustainable and profitable.

'We're very much a family-run operation and all of us make our contributions in different ways. Rosie's particularly good with supporting the marketing of the property and the products, and we all help each other generally and it works really well. Sam does a lot of stock work and Claudia does a little bit of work on her pony as well.'

In addition to producing lucerne as fodder for clients

including racehorse properties, and grazing for his own stock, Gary now produces a range of mulch and fertiliser products under the Earthco brand.

‘In developing the Earthco products, we worked with nutrition in the soil. After many years of testing we found we were able to increase the nutrient levels in the lucerne to such an extent that we could put it in the garden market as a registered fertilizer.

‘Both the mulch and fertiliser products work well in the urban gardens as they help mulch and save water, and they also help reduce water consumption – very important these days!’

Gary markets the products via his website, garden experts, and client recommendation.

He sees the Earthco range as playing a significant role in the future of the farm business.

‘By far our biggest business is our stockfeed business, however, I can see in years to come, with water shortages in the cities and the fact that these are clean green products, the Earthco side of our farm’s business will grow significantly.’

Drought has been a major challenge for Gary, however, the construction of a bore, and water trading, has helped Merriment to remain profitable.

‘We’ve been badly hit by the drought – considering we’re an irrigation farm it has basically taken our production systems away.

‘We temporarily trade water and we try to secure ourselves with continuous accounting. But we also installed an irrigation bore which gives us around about 600 megalitres per annum – it has been a godsend for us and is probably the only thing keeping the business going at the moment.

‘Remaining flexible and being able to adapt what is produced on the farm to suit these tough drought conditions has helped us to remain profitable.’

Making the best of the farm’s natural resources and striving for sustainability are two important goals for Gary. Tree planting, landcare and remnant regeneration are just some of his initiatives.

‘We decided right at the start that trees would play a role on our farm. We’ve got significant remnant areas on the property which we wanted to maintain and enhance. We’ve now fenced all those off with help from the Catchment Management Authority and the Landcare movement, and Jemalong Irrigation.

‘But what we’re finding now is that the trees that we planted 12-14 years ago, at

the start of the development phase, are now six and seven metres high and we’ve got 16 thousand trees in to date and they’re doing very well.

‘So the trees have played a valuable role, both for wind breaks, aesthetic value and livestock.’

Gary sees the agriculture sector as just as capable of achieving successful outcomes as any city business and wants to support others in staying in the game.

‘I think the first thing is to make sure you’ve got a farm that is capable of producing your needs – it needs to have enough scale to give you the lifestyle you require and the amount of income that’s needed to do that.

‘I think if you try to achieve some high yields and market the products well, and stay open to adaptation of new marketing opportunities or ways of doing things, you can do equal to any city business.’

Gary was awarded the 2006 NSW Farmer of Year and received \$10,000 in recognition of his efforts in sustainable farming. For more information go to: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au

LOVING EARTH

The wonder of the smallest things,
That are placed on this earth;
Are here for all of us to see,
And marvel at their worth.

for in this life that passes by;
There are treasures in nature's kind.
Gifts from heavens' kingdom;
Not knowing man or time.

So wonder at the pastures,
And marvel at the hills;
For all of these are ours you see,
There to drink our fill.

The beauty of the earth we have;
The grass, the sky, the seas.
Must be kept and sacred;
Fight to save the trees.

For if it goes, then so do we.
This madness in our time.
Keep it safe and love it too;
Save it for all mankind.

© GEMMA RIDLEY, WAGGA WAGGA

New rainfall prediction service

The Bureau of Meteorology has launched a new online service for people involved in primary production and natural resource management. ‘Water and the Land’ provides access to maps and data where you view climate information such as long-term rainfall trends, seasonal predictions and El Nino/La Nina outlooks.

Visit: www.bom.gov.au/watl

Mary White – what a life

By Margaret Francis, Co-Chair, RWN State Advisory Committee

A couple of years ago I stayed at Dr Mary E White's 'Falls Forest Retreat' (north of Taree) for a conference. I was enchanted by both the location and the hostess. The retreat is right in the middle of a beautiful rainforest. This private sanctuary provides an opportunity for us to share in Mary's wisdom while experiencing and learning first hand what she has been writing about for the last 25 years.

After enjoying Mary's bountiful hospitality during the day, our conference group settled down around the fire with a glass of wine. We listened to guest speakers and discussed many topics including the conference theme of climate change and how it will affect us. Mary bustled about in the kitchen, making sure we had everything we needed, and listened to the conversations. After a hard day of work, she told us her life story. Listening to this remarkable and dynamic woman, I realised she moved to this valley and started this tourism retreat at the age of 77!

Mary inherited a run-down property and has spent much energy enthusiastically creating a home and the environment her guests now enjoy. The location is beautiful but the workload must have been (and still is) enormous. Mary has achieved much in her life and now, aged 80, is writing an autobiography. She is a remarkable woman: mother, scientist, author and now businesswoman. I am so impressed by her

determination, resilience and ability to adapt to change.

Mary is a palaeobotanist. This is the science of combining geology and plants through the study of plant fossils. Her childhood was spent in Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. Mary's parents were both scientists. Her father was a geologist and her mother a botanist. As a child she roamed the veldt observing and learning about the land, its flora and fauna.

Mary left home to go to University in Cape Town during the war years. I can only imagine how hard it must have been for her parents to let her go so far away during such uncertain times. Whilst there she studied under Professor Alex du Toit a 'father' of the continental drift theory. This gave Mary a lifetime fascination with studying 'Gondwana.'

Mary married a geologist. They lived all over the African continent from Somalia to South Africa. In 1955 they immigrated to Australia with their three children. Arriving in Fremantle, Mary was struck by the similarity of Australian flora to African. They moved to Canberra and then to Sydney, where Mary worked as a consultant with the Bureau of Mineral Resources and was able to combine working from home with being a mother of her growing family of five children.

A 44-gallon drum of fossil specimens would be delivered regularly to Mary's backyard. She would identify the plants and assess the time period they

were captured in the stone. This enhanced the mapping of major geological basins for the Commonwealth's exploration of coal, oil and gas. The Australian and the Mining museums used Mary's expertise in collating and identifying hundreds of exhibits. All this during school hours!

In 1966 the family moved to the harbour beach suburb of Forty Baskets, an idyllic setting. Mary's husband was often away on field trips, which meant she was often left at home although they tried to join him when they could. It was an inspiring and creative marriage of two scientific minds.

In 1981, when their youngest child was 16, their wonderful partnership came to an end when her husband died after a three-year battle with cancer. As a way of coping with her loss, Mary travelled to Europe and Britain. This gave her the chance to compare the fossils and plant life of the Southern and Northern Hemispheres. She discovered huge differences. As no book presented a big picture of the evolution of the southern continent, Mary wrote her first book, *The Greening Of Gondwana*, to fill the void.

Mary came back to Australia with a new career as author and lecturer. For the last 25 years she has been writing and presenting her passion for the prehistoric world and the evolution of the Australian continent with its unique history, flora and fauna. Forty-five million years ago we became an island continent. Mary's studies look back over 400 million years, when plants



first made their appearance on earth. Her knowledge of the changes that shape our land gives her an unrivalled and unique insight. Mary says 'Knowledge of the ancient history that created the modern continent is essential to understanding and remedying the environmental problems that beset today's Australia.' Global warming is adding uncertainty, and Mary says there is no room for complacency.

With 80 hectares to manage she now realises the many difficulties landowners face. Her admiration of farmers trying to make a living from the land and battling the driest vegetated continent on earth has led her to encourage greater use of innovative agricultural practices which are quite different to those we inherited from the Northern Hemisphere. This land responds differently and is already stretched to the limit.

Mary's life has been intrepid and she has bravely faced many challenges. She shows us that if we live on the land we need to be 'adaptive.'

Mary is now living her dream to share a 'Gondwana' with us. She has certainly inspired me, and I can't wait to read her story when it is published.

www.fallsretreat.com.au

State Plan launched

NSW Premier, the Hon Morris Iemma MP, launched the State Plan: A New Direction for NSW, on 14 November 2006.

The Plan is about delivering better results for the NSW community from Government services. It does this by setting clear priorities for Government action, with challenging targets for improvement to guide decision-making and resource allocation. It sets out how Government will work to deliver on the targets under this Plan, with fundamental reforms to Government accountability and reporting. This will assist in driving prioritisation and implementation.

Its creation follows lengthy consultation with the public. In total, around 4000 people and organisations provided feedback on the Plan during its consultation phase and around 50,000 people visited the State Plan website during the consultation process to find out more about the draft Plan. In addition, 31 forums were held across NSW throughout August and September with 19 of these held in regional centres.

The Plan focuses on five areas of activity of the NSW Government: Rights, Respect and Responsibility; Delivering Better Services; Fairness and Opportunity; Growing Prosperity Across NSW; and Environment For Living. Under these activity areas, the Plan identifies 34 measurable priorities that will drive the actions and decisions of Government.

A key goal of the Plan is stronger rural and regional economies. To achieve this goal, the Plan's priorities include increasing business investment and access to training in rural and regional NSW. The Government is committed to improving programs which help businesses establish or expand in regional NSW and help regional communities build local economic capacity.

To attract and maintain productive businesses, and give individuals more opportunity, the Plan commits Government to making more Vocational Education and Training places available across rural and regional NSW.

The State Plan priorities will be delivered across the State. The community feedback highlighted the need for the State Government

to work more effectively with local government and community partners on its priorities to ensure local delivery.

For each of the nine regions of NSW, specific regional delivery plans have been prepared which identify ways the Government can work in partnership on the specific actions captured under each regional delivery plan. Delivery of these actions will be driven locally by the Regional Coordination Management Groups (RCMG) that bring together senior officers from across State Government at the regional level. NSW DPI's Regional Directors are participating on the RCMGs.

For more information go to: www.nsw.gov.au/stateplan

Environmental Management System Incentives Program

The Environmental Management System (EMS) is a property management and planning tool that helps rural industries and individual primary producers to better manage impacts on the environment, improve sustainability, production efficiencies and potential profits. The Environmental Management System Incentive Program (EMSIP) provides a taxable cash reimbursement for activities associated with the development and implementation of an Environmental Management System by primary production enterprises. The program is available until 30 June 2007.

The EMSIP is funded by the Australian Government and designed to encourage the use of sustainable management practices by primary producers. By developing an EMS, rural industries and individual primary producers can better manage impacts on the environment, improve sustainability, and create production efficiencies and potential profits.

To be eligible for EMSIP, you must:

- Be a primary production enterprise as defined by the Australian Taxation Office;
- Be operating in Australia;
- Have a taxable income of less than \$45,000; and
- Have a plan in place that documents essential EMS elements which are consistent with existing catchment/regional plans.

The EMSIP payment will reimburse up to 50 per cent of the costs associated with developing and implementing an EMS for a primary production enterprise.

The maximum cash reimbursement of \$3,000 is available to enterprises with a taxable income of \$40,000 or less, that have spent at least \$6,000 on developing an EMS. The maximum entitlement reduces by \$3 for every \$5 in taxable income over \$40,000.

Multiple claims per enterprise may be lodged over the life of the program. However, total reimbursement cannot exceed \$3,000.

Examples of the types of expenses covered under EMSIP include:

- Establishing trees and shrubs for biodiversity or erosion control;
- Fencing to exclude stock or vermin and establish or protect native vegetation and wildlife;
- Eradication of weeds or pests that are detrimental to the land;
- Implementation of bycatch reduction devices.

For more information, call Freecall 1800 050 585 or go to: www.centrelink.gov.au

Source: Rural News Spring 2006