

# commercial feedback

Commercial update from Neutrog #8



Wirra Wirra Vineyard  
Rin Pra Produce  
Delta Produce  
Seamungus Trials

# Wirra Wirra Vineyard



Wirra Wirra Vineyard is located in the beautiful McLaren Vale wine region of South Australia. With 100 acres under vines (which were first planted in 1894 by the eccentric cricketer Robert Strangeways Wigley), Wirra Wirra Vineyard exports to more than 8 countries around the world including the US, UK, China, New Zealand and Europe.

With a substantial number of medals under its belt, Wirra Wirra has just celebrated winning the very impressive 'International Red Winemaker of the Year' award as part of the London International Wine Challenge. With over 9300 wines entered into the show, there were only 19 which were judged worthy of international trophies.

Originally from New Zealand, Richard Wellsmore has been the vineyard supervisor at Wirra Wirra for the last 8 years, and with a passion for biodynamic viticulture, has undertaken trials including purchasing a mechanical undervine weeder to eliminate the use of herbicide, has lowered fungicide in the vineyard, and has, over the last 3 years, moved away from synthetic based herbicides. The vineyard now operates a complete biodynamic program on 22 acres with pesticides or herbicides no longer used,

although a copper and sulphur program is still maintained.

The vineyard recycles all waste water, and as it is focussed on increasing soil bacteria, humus and microbe levels through organic and biodynamic practices, it therefore decreases water requirements, which in turn creates a healthier soil.

After using Neutrog's Rapid Raiser on his garden at home for years, Richard noticed Seamungus in the local hardware store, gathered further information from the Neutrog website, and decided to 'Just Try It'. Wirra Wirra now use Seamungus in permanent

sward growth to improve soil structure, as the soils hadn't been fertilised since 1999. A recent set count showed the vineyard is on target for the desired yield, but more importantly, tissue tests have shown quality is at premium levels which reflects the winery's positioning of quality as the number one priority. Richard is pleased with the performance of Seamungus saying "It's a perfect product for us because it is certified organic, which follows the Company's ethos of what we want to achieve". The Seamungus is broadcast with a Marshall spreader at 350kg per Ha on permanent

swards, and at 1 tonne per Ha on triticale cover crops instead of Superphosphate.

Wirra Wirra have just purchased another 50 acres of vineyards in McLaren Vale, and Richard comments "The whole property is sandy soil, so we will definitely be using Seamungus to improve the soil quality there". He sees water and environmental issues being the biggest challenges for the future, but Richard says that more growers in the McLaren Vale region are switching to organic / biodynamic farming to get their inputs down, which will be beneficial to all growers in the long term.



Richard Wellsmore  
Vineyard Supervisor

# Seamungus results continue to roll in

Since our last update in the previous commercial edition of 'Feedback', there have been a number of positive developments in respect to Seamungus applications.

Our carrot trial in the Virginia area where Seamungus was applied at 1 tonne per hectare prior to seeding produced a yield increase of 11% over the control area - this resulted in an additional return of \$1365 per hectare.

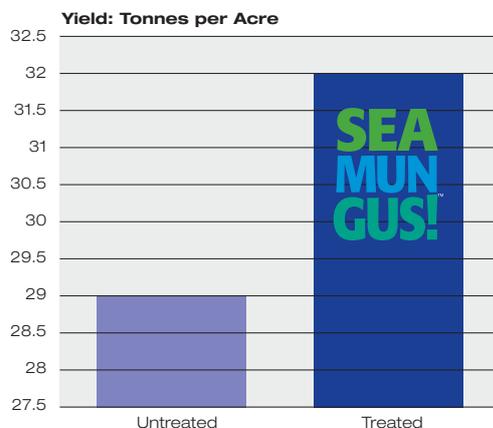
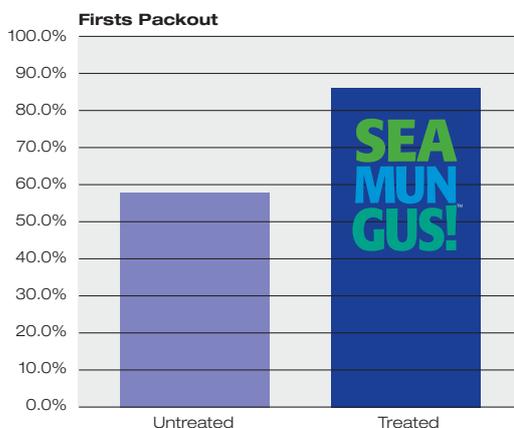
Most significantly, the pack out of the treated area produced substantially less seconds - see graph. This is consistent with the results achieved in other vegetable crops grown with Seamungus.

Vic Szabo of Sustainable Horticultural Services concluded in his trial report "In organic-carbon poor soils Seamungus produced better quality and higher yields. It is obvious that Seamungus in tuber and root crops improved the utilisation of synthetic fertilisers, NPK and Calcium.

It also improved the uptake of Zinc, Manganese, Copper, Boron and Molybdenum. On the basis of the figures presented in this report, Seamungus applications in poor organic carbon soil offer a number of benefits including a greatly reduced uptake of Sodium."

We are also now into the second year of our Seamungus trail on almonds - after a reasonably disappointing result in the first year where the increased return of only \$150 per hectare did not justify the cost of the additional Seamungus application, the yield results from the second year of Seamungus application will be available within the next few weeks. From a visual perspective it is looking very promising, with a yield increase of up to 20% expected. If you would like a copy of these results please contact us.

Further Seamungus trials are underway including trials in Victoria on potatoes and snow peas.



## Running for cover

With rapidly rising chemical fertiliser prices and a shortage of supply, many broad acre farmers have been enquiring about which Neutrog products are suitable alternatives for cereal cropping and pasture application.

Whilst Neutrog manufactures a huge range of differing blends and can in fact produce a blend to suit any specific requirement, there are basically 3 'standard' products Neutrog produces that are suitable for cereal cropping and pasture - Bounce

Back (3/2/2 - 100% organic), Rapid Raiser (4/3/2 - 100% organic) and Undercover (6/6/1 - includes 20% DAP plus added levels of zinc and manganese).

Undercover has been specifically developed with the inclusion of 20% DAP for those farmers who are, understandably but unnecessarily, nervous about changing immediately over from straight chemical fertilisers to their 100% organic counterparts.

We do appreciate that it is difficult for traditional,

conventional farmers to comprehend how 100% organic



fertilisers with such low NPK's can perform to the same or better levels than their previously used chemical fertilisers - the only way to really challenge this and find out for yourself is to "Just Try It".

The huge growth Neutrog has been experiencing in broadacre application is a testament to the success of these products - we are happy to provide the contact details of broad acre farmers in specific areas who have used Neutrog's products successfully.

# Delta Produce

When speaking with the Rathjen family, one gets the impression that they know farming inside out, and that's exactly how it is. The Rathjens have been farming for 5 generations – initially producing wheat and sheep, but their focal point for the last 25 years has been vegetables.

Situated in Caloote – half way between Mannum and Murray Bridge, Delta Produce is managed by Steve Rathjen and his two sons Darren and Brendan. The property produces onions as the core business, along with potatoes, grain and cereal hay on rotation.

Steve is the Chairman of Onions Australia (the National Industry Association), and within this role has travelled to Holland to view their onion growing processes, and to gain the latest ideas from world leaders. Locally, Steve has also played a part in the creation of the 'Rivapak Group' in Mannum, which is made up of

a small number of growers who have come together to market and distribute their combined produce.

Delta Produce has been working in conjunction with SARDI (South Australian Research and Development Institute) in trialling Integrated Pest Management (IPM). This process enables farmers to release natural predatory insects to overcome insect infestation such as thrip. Delta Produce has had huge success with IPM on their sweet corn and potato crops, and is now conducting trials on red onions. The results of IPM have shown an increased pack-out rate of 15%, reduced cost of spraying insecticide, and it obviously benefits the environment at the same time.

Delta Produce has been a committed user of Neutrog products for as long as Steve can remember. After using one application of raw chook



Brendan Rathjen

litter and subsequently trying to overcome the massive weed problem, Steve switched to Bounce Back and Rapid Raiser as a supplement to the existing fertiliser program.

"We use Neutrog products for a few reasons – mainly for quality assurance, preventing soil erosion, and also to encourage the onions to get established" Steve said. The product is

applied as a pre-plant as well as a top dressing with a twin spinner, which Steve finds to be the most efficient, especially for smaller areas. It is applied at approximately 1 to 2 tonnes per hectare.

The plan for Delta Produce in the future is for Steve, Darren and Brendan to expand the business even further.

# Rin Pra Produce

The Rinaldi family business originated back in the 1960's growing vegetables, and is now seeing the third generation of family members working in the business.

Peter Rinaldi started the business in the 60's, and once his son David turned 16 he left school to work with his father. David has since played a major part in incorporating new concepts within the business – Rin Pra was the first company in South Australia to implement quality control procedures under SQF 2000 – developed to address food quality and safety for a range of food products at all stages in the supply chain. This involves a requirement of individual business risk assessments to be carried out by trained and competent practitioners. David has also implemented Robot Stackers in the SA onion industry, as well as electronic 'vision' grading

machinery, and established on-farm cold storage.

Covering two sites, the property is 800 acres in total, and is based near Murray Bridge in South Australia. These days Rin Pra's main production is brown, red and white onions of differing varieties, with an approximate yield of 35 tonne per acre. Rin Pra Produce distributes its produce through merchants within Australia, and also exports to Asia and Italy.

David is a firm believer in the benefits of using Neutrog fertilisers "...mainly for the organic content" he says. "The slow release properties help to combat disease whilst the onions are being established". David has been using Neutrog products for 15 years – currently having great success with Bounce Back. It is applied with a 1.5 tonne twin spreader (spinner), at three applications of 400-500 kg/acre; one

application at pre-planting, the second at 'first leaf', and the third at 'third leaf'. "This is used as a supplement for organic build-up in conjunction with ammonium nitrate, calcium nitrate and potash, although rates vary greatly due to plant requirements and site locations" David said. He has found that "...there is certainly an improvement in the soil structure – especially in sandy areas after using Neutrog", and will continue to use it in the future.

As the Managing Director of Rin Pra Produce for the last 23 years, David, who is now

working alongside his son Joel, sees the challenges of the industry being a combination of water availability and oversees imports as the biggest hurdles to overtake, but his future plan is to expand and diversify the core business as much as possible under these challenges.

Part of this diversification is offering bulk haulage and flat tray work, which enables Rin Pra to benefit in many areas including stock control, and is also a service now available to other growers in the district. Any enquiries can be directed to rinpra@lm.net.au



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**Just try it.**

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