



REGIONAL INTERNSHIP IN APPLIED GRAINS RESEARCH

RESEARCH SUMMARY

H117

FAST FACTS

PROBLEM

Researchers are vital to the SA grain industry and attracting new entrants is essential for future resilience and growth.

PROJECT

Three graduate ag students were appointed as interns for one year each, gaining valuable exposure, experience and skills in grains research.

PARTICIPANTS

Hart Field-Site Group: Dr Sarah Noack, Rebekah Allen, Sandy Kimber, Ryan Wood

Interns: Emma Pearse, Jade Rose, Brianna Guidera

SARDI: Kathy Ophel-Keller, Marg Evans, Ross Ballard, Liz Farquharson, Sarah Day, Penny Roberts, Kenton Porker, Courtney Peirce

DATES

Start: 1 March 2018

Finish: 28 February 2021

Hart Field-Site Group supported three post-graduate Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) interns for one year each.

Through the program, these future grains researchers were able to work alongside Hart and SARDI researchers, as well as with growers and advisers.

They completed useful research, gained valuable hands-on experience in both research and communication, and developed valuable personal and professional networks to help support their future careers.

BACKGROUND

With SAGIT support, Hart Field-Site Group appointed and mentored three interns for a period of one year each, providing experience in a wide range of applied Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) relevant to the South Australian grains industry.

Interns worked on a range of projects with Hart and SARDI, and gained skills including development of trial protocols, paddock selection, trial design and setup, management, soil sampling and plant assessments, data entry and statistical analysis, extension and communication activities and working with growers, advisers and other researchers.

RESEARCH AIMS

The core objectives of the project were to:

- Encourage high quality agricultural science students to pursue careers in applied research through a regionally based internship program.
- Give students an overview of the fundamentals of applied RD&E in the SA grains industry.

IN THE FIELD

2018 Intern: Emma Pearse

Emma was a BSc Natural Resource Management graduate with First Class Honours from the University of Western Australia. While at Hart, she worked with Ross Ballard and Liz Farquharson at SARDI on chickpea nodulation in acid soils, and studied plant establishment and uniformity with Hart staff. Following her internship, Emma secured a two-year role as a Development Officer with WA DPIRD and has now relocated back to her family's farm at Miling, WA.

2019 Intern: Jade Rose

Jade had earned her Honours at SARDI Waite before joining the Hart program and was keen for more interaction with growers. The Hart committee paired her with Sarah Day at SARDI Clare, working on southern agronomy pulse projects and manipulating field pea canopy

structure for improved disease control. She also worked on a smaller grower-based project with Hart involving soil sampling, implementing fertiliser test strips and obtaining yield map data.

Jade is currently working as Project Coordinator with the Upper North Farming Systems group while completing her PhD with the University of Adelaide soils group.

2020 Intern: Brianna Guidera

A B.Sc Ag graduate from the University of Adelaide, Brianna worked with Courtney Peirce at SARDI on export oaten hay production. This included a large field trial at Hart looking at variety selection, seeding date and nitrogen management, with a secondary pot experiment at Waite. With a strong interest in soils, Brianna also worked with Hart staff on a grower-based soil and plant testing project. She has now secured a position as Consultant in Sustainable Agriculture with Rural Solutions, based in Port Lincoln and working alongside Brett Masters.

At the completion of their internship, all three interns said they had gained increased experience and confidence in conducting trial planning and design, conducting trial sampling and measurements, statistical analysis of trial data, and communicating effectively with growers, advisers and researchers.

They valued seeing their projects progress from design to sharing the findings, and noted the extension and networking opportunities of the program as a particular highlight.

RESULTS

This internship program has:

- Improved ag graduates' understanding of careers in applied grains RD&E.
- Demonstrated there are career options available in regional areas, with ongoing access to skill and career development opportunities.
- Provided a valuable year of training and mentoring for interns transitioning from university to the next stage of their careers.
- Helped interns develop the personal and professional networks required for future employment opportunities.
- Expanded graduates' understanding of the diversity of jobs in research, including field or lab focused roles, and differing degrees of emphasis across research, development and extension.

VALUE FOR GROWERS

This investment has given three talented and enthusiastic agriculture graduates a strong and practical grounding for their chosen careers in applied grains research, development and extension.

SAGIT also supported the Hart internship program in 2016 (Rochelle Wheaton), 2017 (Dylan Bruce) and 2021-2022 (Declan Anderson).

Programs like this are important for the long-term succession of agriculture graduates into the industry and strengthen SA's future grains research capacity.

MORE INFORMATION:

Ms Sandy Kimber, HFSG

T: 0427 423 154

E: admin@hartfieldsite.org.au



2019 intern Jade Rose (left) with SARDI's Sara Blake.

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