

tussock times

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Hay Beware!

Victorians have generously been donating hay and fodder for the stock that survived the horrific 'Black Saturday' bushfires on the 7th February 2009 but this generous gift may be giving landholders more than just feed.

Weeds including serrated tussock are often introduced into regions by contaminated hay and fodder leading to the spread and establishment of noxious weeds.

"Bushfire affected areas are susceptible to weed invasion as there is a large amount of bare ground favouring their establishment," said Chelsea Wardrope of the Department of Primary Industries.

"To reduce the chances of introducing weeds into bushfire affected areas the donators of hay and fodder should ensure that the donated products are weed free"

Landholders of fire affected areas can protect their properties against the introduction of new weeds by ensuring they feed their stock in

designated feeding areas away from drainage lines and monitoring their properties for new weeds particularly in the feeding areas.

Weeds such as serrated tussock can also be commonly distributed by wind, livestock and vehicles. Fire fighting activities may have also contributed to the spread of weeds.

Given the number of emergency vehicles that responded to the bushfires and the generous amount of hay being donated, the chances of new weeds entering bushfire affected areas is very high.

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party sends their sincere condolences to all those who were affected by the bushfires and encourages Victorians to be on the look out for germinating serrated tussock plants and other weeds in the affected areas.

A Department of Primary Industries (DPI) 'Weed warning, drought, fire and flood' brochure is available by contacting DPI on 136 186 or visiting www.dpi.vic.gov.au/weeds.



Being On The Lookout For Emerging Tussocks

By Alyce Sedgman, Department of Primary Industries

Being on the lookout for emerging seedlings is one of the key strategies for helping to fight the damaging weed, serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*).

Serrated tussock is classed as a regionally controlled weed in the Port Phillip and Corangamite Catchments and regionally prohibited in all other Catchments of Victoria. It poses a serious threat to agricultural systems and environmental values.

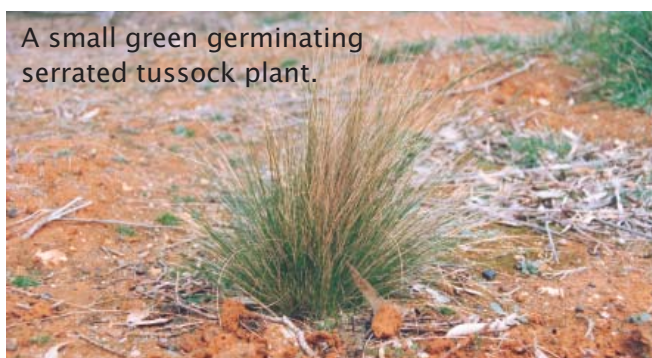
The Department of Primary Industries and the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party are encouraging landholders to undertake control works on serrated tussock.

The Department of Primary Industries rural extension officer, Alyce Sedgman said “looking out for emerging seedlings coming into Autumn and carrying out early treatment of these immature plants ensures discontinued growth and reduced workload though reducing infestation size.”

“Pastures are dried off and grazed low this time of year,” Ms Sedgeman said.

Serrated tussock infestations are easily identified as they are generally still green and healthy and stand out against grazed paddocks.

“Serrated tussock is best managed with an integrated strategy to ensure that each method of control is reinforced with other measured of control,” she said.



A small green germinating serrated tussock plant.

Manual removal or spot spraying with registered herbicides are two methods of treatment for low density infestations which are best suited to controlling emerging plants.

DPI Reduces The Threat Of Invasive Species

The threat of Mexican feather grass (MFG) becoming naturalised and impacting on Victoria’s environment, economy and social values has been significantly reduced as a result of the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) response effort over the past ten months.

DPI officers have recovered over 7000 plants since the operation began in May 2008 after it was discovered that MFG (*Nassella tenuissima*), a declared State prohibited weed, was inadvertently supplied to and sold by a number of retail chain stores in Victoria.

While DPI is pleased with the outcomes of the response, it is acknowledged that there is still work to be done with approximately 3,500 plants still unaccounted for.

DPI recovery works will be focused on surveillance in areas where trade was known to have occurred with the continued monitoring and treatment of known infestation sites.

DPI will also continue to build partnerships and work with industry to reduce the risk of invasive plants being imported in the future.

DPI is encouraging residents to be on the look out for Mexican feather grass.

If you suspect you may have purchased or seen a Mexican feather grass plant please contact DPI on 136 186 or see their website for more information at www.dpi.vic.gov.au/weeds.



Serrated Tussock Project Areas For 2009 - 2010

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) has received notification from the Department of Primary Industries that the serrated tussock program for the Port Phillip and Westernport and Corangamite Catchments has been postponed until further notice.

The Department of Primary Industries is the main service provider to the Victorian serrated tussock program but due to the ongoing commitment to emergency response and recovery by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), directly related to the recent Victorian bushfires and agricultural recovery projects, DPI has had to postpone several pest plant and animal programs in Victoria due to resource demands.

Recently, the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party requested and received serrated tussock project proposals from municipal councils and landcare networks in the Port Phillip and Corangamite Catchments. The call for project areas was for the VSTWP to allocate available resources of the Department of Primary Industries Serrated Tussock Extension and Compliance Programs for 2009 – 2010.

For the project proposals that the VSTWP have received from municipal councils and landcare networks, the working party is grateful for the amount of time and effort shown by these organisations in putting together their proposals and is sincerely sorry for the inconvenience caused.

The VSTWP will still be assessing the project areas submitted and providing assistance to priority areas when resources become available.

Stop Seeding Or Spend A Long Time Weeding

“New seed, 10 years of weed,” summed up a Bathurst workshop participant in 2007.

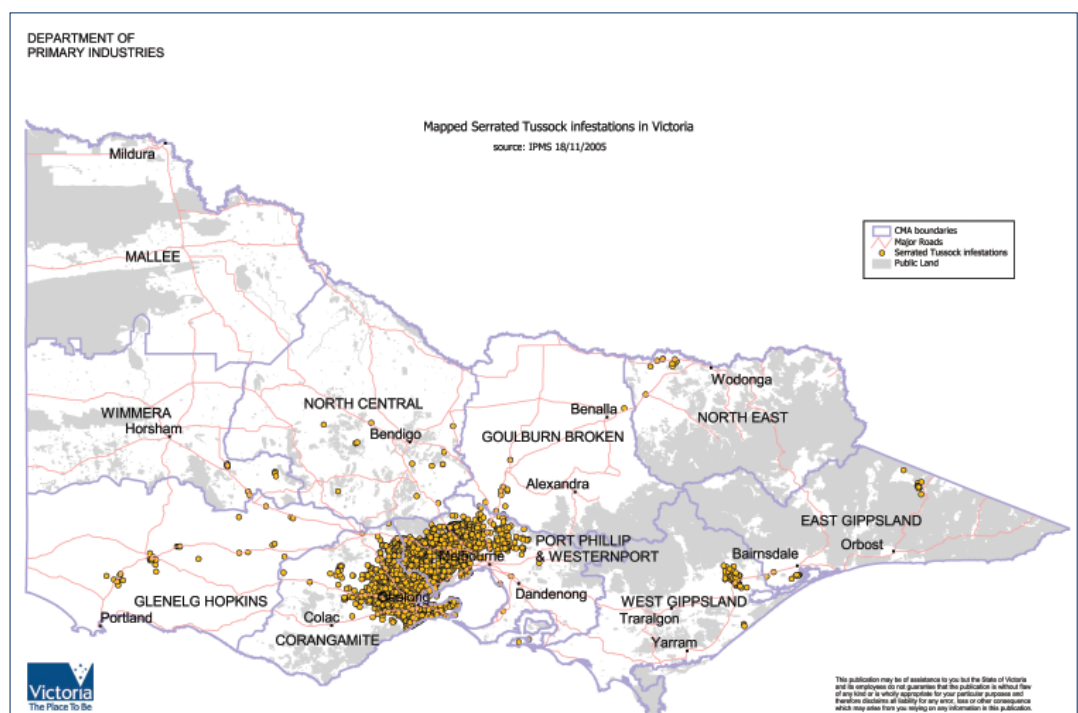
“The importance of preventing serrated tussock setting seed this year cannot be stressed enough as each mature plant is capable of producing up to 140,000 seeds, this equates to between 900 and 3,400million seeds a hectare,” said Chelsea Wardrope of the Department of Primary Industries.

Spray serrated tussock with Flupropanate between March and May this year to stop plants flowering and setting seed in Spring and Summer.

The effects of spraying may not be seen for two to five months whilst the selective herbicide, Flupropanate is absorbed by the plants roots but spraying before July gives the chemical ample time to take effect before serrated tussock flowers and sets seed from October.

Ensure you read the label prior to spraying as withholding periods apply.

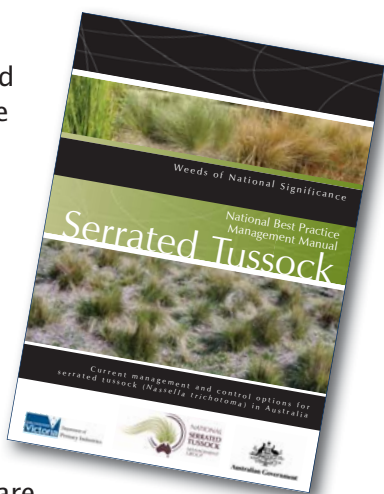
For further information on management options please refer to the National Serrated Tussock Best Practice Manual found at www.serratedtussock.com or obtain a copy by contacting the Department of Primary Industries on 136 186.



Map of serrated tussock infestations in Victoria

Manual Helping Land Managers Control Serrated Tussock

The National Serrated Tussock Best Practice Manual released in November 2008 has proved to be a very popular resource in assisting with the management of serrated tussock with thousands of manuals being sent to government organisations, landcare groups and land managers in Australia.



The manual is the first comprehensive collation of information available on serrated tussock management in Australia and has proved to be a vital tool in the fight against this devastating weed.

As a Weed of National Significance the serrated tussock manual brings together detailed information about the plant itself, as well as best practice information about existing control and management options.

Landcare groups and land managers of serrated tussock can obtain a copy of the National Serrated Tussock Best Practice Manual by contacting the Department of Primary Industries on 136 186 or by visiting www.serratedtussock.com.

Legislative Changes To Temperate Grasslands

By Hume City Council

In June 2008, the Natural Temperate Grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plains was listed in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC) 1999.

Since then, there has been a certain amount of concern in the rural community about the implications for landholders, particularly for broad scale weed control.

What does the new listing mean?

Natural Temperate Grassland is defined for protection under the Act as any area dominated by remnant native grasses and associated plants where:

- perennial native grass cover is at least 50%. This can consist of Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*), Spear Grass (*Austrostipa* sp.), Wallaby Grass (*Austrodanthonia* sp.) or Native Tussocks (*Poa* sp.).
- If the total cover of native grasses is less than 50% then the area is still protected under the Act if there is at least 50% cover of native herbs and forbs (wildflowers).



Native tussock, *Poa Labillardieri*



A native grassland

The grassland is still protected even if it meets neither of these criteria if non grass weeds such as broad leaf weeds constitute less than 30% of the vegetation cover.

How does this affect landholders?

The listing means that in most cases you will be unable to undertake any activity that might damage even a small grassland remnant, for example broad scale spraying. Under the Act patches of grassland as small as 0.05 hectares are covered.

Broad scale spraying, especially serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*), is the most efficient method only where the cover is so high as to preclude almost anything else.

If the serrated tussock is dense enough to merit broad scale spraying, it is highly unlikely that the area will consist of 50% or more of native grass. Council is available to assist you in determining if this is the case should you have any doubts.

If the cover of serrated tussock is low enough that there is still 50% of native grass broad scale spraying often does more harm than good. Even selective herbicides such as Flupropanate can knock out native species leaving bare ground for broad leaf weeds and serrated tussock to invade.

If you have the listed grassland community on your property you may be eligible for funding to help preserve or restore remnants. Even now, grasslands can be protected and managed on private land as an offset for clearing elsewhere, with direct payment to the landholder.

For further information on the EPBC Act 1999 or to find out if you're eligible for the Bush Broker Scheme please contact your council or the Department of Sustainability and Environment on 136 186.

Winner Of The Serrated Tussock Slogan Competition.

Growing SERRATED TUSSOCK? Cut it out!

Congratulations to Deirdre Murphy from Corangamite Waterwatch for winning a \$50 Bunning's voucher for developing the slogan "Growing serrated tussock, Cut it out!" The slogan will be used on the new Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party bumper stickers and other educational material that will be produced in the near future.

The competition, supported by the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party asked key stakeholders to develop and submit a creative slogan. Over 20 very good entries were received and the VSTWP thanks those who submitted a slogan for their creative inputs.

Visiting Scientist Issues Loud Warning

By Fran Hausman, Incursion Officer, DPI



DPI in cooperation with the Australian Alps Liaison Committee, Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment and Climate Change (NSW) recently hosted a New Zealand Hawkweeds expert to present learning's from the New Zealand experience in managing Hawkweeds and to help develop a plan to eradicate these invasive weeds from the Australian Alps.

During his visit, research scientist Dr Peter Espie, issued a loud warning about the massive damage this weed could do to agriculture here if it's not eradicated.

In New Zealand, over 6 million hectares are infested with ten Hawkweed species making eradication no longer feasible.

In Australia two species, Orange Hawkweed and King Devil Hawkweed, have been found in the Alps; in the Falls Creek area and surrounding parts of the Bogong High Plains, at Mt Buller and in the Jagungal Wilderness of Kosciuszko National Park.

Hawkweeds have a remarkable ability to spread and colonise native pastures with a rapid smothering growth pattern, which greatly reduces productivity. The consequences for both biodiversity and primary production of failing to eradicate these species are extremely serious.

According to Dr Espie eradicating Hawkweeds from Australia is still feasible if we act quickly and learn from the mistakes made in New Zealand.

He said any strategy to eradicate Hawkweeds here will require a co-ordinated approach of detection, treatment, monitoring, research and publicity.

For more information or to make a report of Hawkweed please contact your local WACO or call the Department of Primary Industries on 136 186.

Research

Herbicide Resistant Plants Confirmed In Victoria



Population of serrated tussock resistant to Flupropanate.

Research conducted by the Department of Primary Industries has confirmed that populations of serrated tussock in Victoria and New South Wales have developed resistance to the herbicide, Flupropanate.

Laboratory trials have shown that the resistant serrated tussock is 10 – 20 times more tolerant to the herbicide Flupropanate than susceptible serrated tussock.

The long term implications of herbicide resistance are; its increased dominance as a weed; increased costs for land managers; more herbicide usage and higher environmental pollution as a consequence.

This research has prompted concentrated serrated tussock control programs by the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party, the Victorian Department of Primary Industries and New South Wales Shires to attempt to contain or eradicate the resistant serrated tussock populations.

The results highlight the importance of using integrated control techniques to prevent developing herbicide resistant plants.

If you would like to receive this information/publication in an accessible format (such as large print or audio) please call the Customer Service Centre on: 136 186, TTY: 1800 122 969, or email customer.service@dpi.vic.gov.au

To avoid herbicide resistance do not rely solely on the use of chemicals for its control but use an integrated technique; always apply herbicides according to label directions and regularly rotate herbicide types; monitor infestations and follow up on any regrowing serrated tussock plants; practice weed hygiene and most importantly, never let the weed seed.

If you suspect herbicide resistance on your property please contact the Department of Primary Industries on 136 186.

Contributions And Feedback

Thank you to those who sent back their questionnaire that was sent out with the January edition of the Tussock Times. We have tried to accommodate most suggestions received in this edition of the Tussock Times. For any further feedback please contact Chelsea Wardrope.

Thank you to those who contributed to this edition of the Tussock Times. Contributions to the next edition of the Tussock Times are welcome to Chelsea Wardrope by Friday 19th June 2009.

To be added to the mailing list please contact Chelsea Wardrope, Serrated Tussock Partnerships Officer, Department of Primary Industries;

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More information on serrated tussock can be found on the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party website www.serratedtussock.com or by contacting DPI on 136 186.

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