

tussock times

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Recommencement of Serrated Tussock Program 2009

As Department of Primary Industries (DPI) involvement in the bushfire response program moves into a recovery phase and the attack on Mexican Feather Grass scales back, planning for the serrated tussock program has resumed.

As the diversion of human resource pressures are relieved, DPI staff are returning to their normal roles. A return of resources to the serrated tussock program is due to recommence by 30 June 2009.

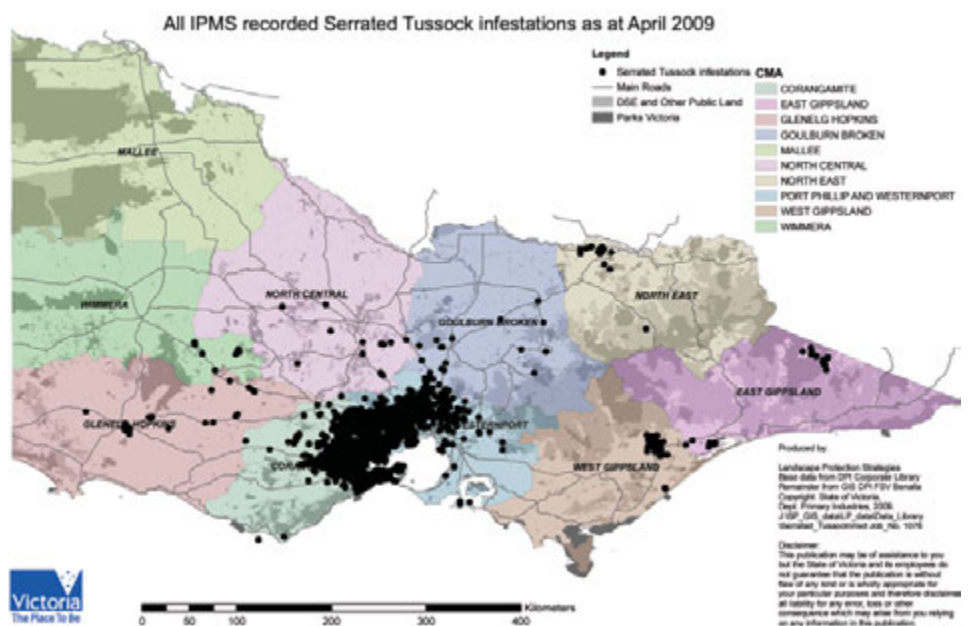
During 2009/10 new processes will be introduced to improve communication and project management between catchment-led projects and those



delivered by the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP). These will help to build the capacity of all the Community Pest Management Groups and improve the delivery of projects under Victoria's Biosecurity approach.

DPI will continue to support the VSTWP and its projects during 2009/10 however, will maintain its commitment to Victoria's emergency response which may impact on projects in the future.

For further information, please contact Chelsea Wardrope, DPI on (03) 5226 4680.



Recognition for a Diligent Weed Activist

Veronica Burgess, long standing member of the Victoria Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP), has been short listed as a candidate for the annual Pride of Australia Environment Award.



Unbeknownst to Veronica, she was nominated as a recipient of the coveted award by her daughter. Veronica only recently discovered her nomination when she was contacted to be told that she had made the top three candidates.

The Pride of Australia medal recognises the outstanding achievements of everyday Australians, whose efforts contribute to the bettering of our communities.

Veronica's nomination is based on her 18 years of service as president of the Friends of Evans Street Grasslands. During this time, a temporary, and now permanent conservation covenant has been placed on the Evans Street Wildflower Grasslands in Sunbury.

This patch is now up for consideration for listing as an area of national significance.

In addition to her efforts with the Friends of Evans Street Grasslands group, Veronica was a councillor with the Shire of Bulla between 1991-94. She has also been on the weed advisory committee to the council of the City of Hume for 20 years, has participated on the councils Environment and Sustainability Committee since its inception and she is a member of the Friends of Sunbury Cemetery.

The winner of the Pride of Australia Environment Award will be announced on the July 19, 2009

Landcare Expo 2009



Department of Primary Industries (DPI) staff attended the first annual Victorian Landcare Expo held at the Caulfield Racecourse on the April 18, 2009. The event aimed to raise awareness of issues relating to land management across Victoria.

DPI secured an exhibition at the expo to promote the importance of noxious weed management, including serrated tussock. Encouragingly, much interest was generated in the DPI stand by the expo attendees, and DPI staff were able to provide advice and extension material to land owners and managers about serrated tussock.

Many of the discussions that staff had on the day were with people who were not already aware of serrated tussock, thus contributing to raising awareness of serrated tussock.

Serrated tussock identification techniques were demonstrated using sealed serrated tussock plant samples.



Rutherglen Community Get Together to Fight Serrated Tussock

By Greg Johnson

Members of the Rutherglen Landcare Group recently got together to improve the treatment of serrated tussock on an infested roadside in the Rutherglen area.

Walking six abreast they marked every serrated tussock plant along both sides of a two kilometre stretch of the Indigo Gooramadda Road with easy to spot, pink, iridescent flags.

In many cases the plants were hard to find as they were small seedlings and often hidden under other vegetation.

Serrated tussock is classified as a Regionally Prohibited Weed in north east Victoria. There are some small infestations in the Rutherglen Chiltern area mainly confined to roadsides; however there are a couple of places where it has invaded adjoining pasture.

It is the landholder's responsibility to treat the plant where it occurs on private land. Indigo Shire and VicRoads will be organising a contractor to treat all known roadside infestations.

The community survey will significantly assist with the elimination of this weed from the local area. Instead of the contractor spending most of his or her time looking for serrated tussock plants he or she will be able to go straight to the pink flags and spray the plant, making for a much more effective and cost efficient overall treatment.

According to Jenny Davidson, Chair of the Rutherglen Chiltern Serrated Tussock Committee the survey was a great success with more than 200 plants marked for treatment.

"Previous treatments of this roadside have often missed plants as they are often small seedlings and well hidden under other vegetation," Ms Davidson said.

"Members of the survey group enjoyed the morning activity and generally agreed that this type of survey could become important part of eliminating serrated tussock from the Rutherglen Chiltern area and the North East."

For more information please contact Greg Johnson at DPI Wodonga on (02) 6043 7900.

Spray and Save

A series of spray drift workshops across Victoria aims to reduce the amount of money spent by farmers on chemical bills.

Broadacre farmers have been able to reduce their chemical expenditure by up to 15 per cent after having been advised in the workshop on good spraying techniques. The workshop provides direction on how to calibrate boom sprays, and CREATES understanding of the complexities of spraying conditions.

Having adopted the techniques that he learnt at the spray drift workshop, a contract sprayer has been able to save \$100,000.

Grains Industry Training Network Executive Officer Nickie Berrisford is responsible for the coordination of the workshops. She notes that some people spray without having the appropriate knowledge and expertise, although an agricultural chemical user's permit is required in Victoria.

Without such training, incidents resulting from poor spraying techniques can arise, such as the occurrence of drift onto neighbouring properties, or causing damage to the crops on ones own property through drift.

To arrange a spray drift workshop in your area, contact Nickie Berrisford on (03) 5226 4075. Payment for this workshop is reimbursable through the Grains Industry Training Network (GITN).

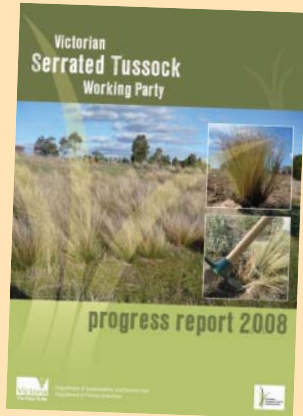


Members of the Rutherglen LandCare Group flagging serrated tussock plants. (Photo courtesy Jenny Davidson)

A year full of achievements - 2008 Serrated Tussock Progress Report

The 2008 Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) Progress Report is now available. The report highlights the achievements in serrated tussock management across the State in the 2007/08 financial year.

The report features articles on the Defeating the Weeds Menace 'isolated infestations for eradication program'; Local and State Government programs by catchment; The Grow West Program; the EverGraze program; achievements of the partnerships officer position; and serrated tussock research funded by the VSTWP.



The progress report is available at www.serratedtussock.com or by contacting Chelsea Wardrope on (03) 5226 4680.

Community led approach the way forward for established pests

The current Community Pest Management Groups across Victoria are set to benefit from a project funded by the Victorian Government's four-year \$205 million Future Farming Initiative that will further develop their ability to manage pests through a community-led approach.

The three current groups - the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party, the Victorian Gorse Taskforce and the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce will directly benefit from the project which supports community-led action on pests.

Agriculture Minister, Joe Helper said the Brumby Government recognises the major inroads that these groups have made in controlling these widespread species. The project will help the groups to further develop community-led action as an effective means to drive voluntary control of these species, rather than relying on legislative enforcement.

"A significant component of the support to the Community Pest Management Groups is ensuring that each of the groups is resourced with an Executive Officer."

"The Executive Officers role is to focus on partnership and relationship development so that responsibility for pest management by the community and key public and private land managers is undertaken collaboratively." Mr Helper said.

"A key objective for the project is to increase the effectiveness of these groups to target serrated tussock, gorse and blackberry within targeted communities across the state and build the community's capacity to voluntarily control these established weeds."

Department of Primary Industries (DPI), Landscape Protection Portfolio Manager, Brendan Roughead said: "DPI is committed to maintaining support for these three Community Pest Management Groups. The project will provide assistance for the groups to improve their internal governance and will provide the tools to develop systems and processes that will enable them to work with targeted communities to achieve more effective long term solutions to widespread pest issues."

Mr Helper said the Brumby Government understands that it is important to support and empower active community groups where possible, especially where their work is of great benefit to the rural communities in which they function.

He said the range of activities these community led groups undertake will actively reduce the impact of these species within targeted communities.

For further information on the Future Farming Strategy contact the DPI Customer Service Centre on 136 186 or visit www.dpi.vic.gov.au



Gorse

Rowsley Valley Bus Tour



On Friday, May 29, a free Rowsley Valley bus tour took participants to various properties which had previously contained large weed infestations.

A joint Melbourne Water and Port Phillip Western Port Catchment Management Authority initiative, the tour facilitated practical insight into the management techniques that three different land owners have employed to successfully control populations of serrated tussock and gorse.

The tour first visited a grazing property on the Werribee River south of Ballan, where a three kilometre water frontage has been fenced off to exclude stock and has been replanted with native vegetation. In an area of dense rocky outcrops, fencing off the hazardous areas has resulted in better stock management. Medium scale serrated tussock and gorse infestations have also been treated on this property.

The next site was the Yaloak Estate, a 14,000 acre sheep grazing and cropping property. Here, extensive, and ongoing efforts have been undertaken largely via the planting of competitive tree species and riparian vegetation to control a heavy serrated tussock infestation. Grow West, the Farm Forestry Project and DPI have assisted in the ongoing commitment to the control of serrated tussock, rabbit control and erosion prevention on this large property.

The tour finished up at the Bacchus Marsh race course. Over the years this property has been transformed from a sea of serrated tussock to a landscape of indigenous vegetation.

“Buddy-ing up with bushfire victims”

Finding the resources to undertake rehabilitative works on fire-affected properties may seem like a daunting prospect for many in the wake of the 2009 bushfires. However, an innovative buddy system, the Landcare Buddies for Bushfire Recovery, which is being coordinated by the Port Phillip and Western Port Catchment Management Authority has been designed to assist fire-affected landowners and groups in the Port Phillip and Western Port region.

This initiative aims to link landholders and Landcare or Friends groups in the fire-affected areas to help in the provision of services such as re-fencing, cleaning up affected areas, growing plants and planting etc.

So far, about ten Landcare and Friends groups from non-fire affected areas of the Port Phillip and Western Port region have volunteered as buddy groups. Clean up and restoration work by groups and individuals has already begun to help minimise the risk of erosion and landslip, but much restoration work is still required on both private and public land.

The Port Phillip and Westernport CMA is asking any group who can to offer assistance to get involved.

Please contact John Robinson, the coordinator of Landcare Buddies for Bushfire Recovery, on john.robinson@ppwcma.vic.gov.au or phone (03) 9218 5611.



A National Focus on Serrated Tussock Management

On the 25th and 26th June 2009 the National Serrated Tussock Management Group (NSTMG) met in Goulburn, NSW to discuss serrated tussock management, State projects and the Weeds of National Significance Review.

The NSTMG, Chaired by Scott Chirnside who also Chaired the VSTWP from 1995 - 2005 and was heavily involved in its conception has representatives from New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Victoria. The Chair and Executive Officer of the VSTWP attended the two day meeting to provide information on the status of the Victorian program and introduce the new community led voluntary compliance program being that will be trailed in Victoria over the next 3 years as a part of a Future Farming Initiative.

The NSTMG, driven by the Weeds of National Significance Program provides an opportunity for representatives across the 4 states to develop partnerships with one another, discuss their statewide approaches to serrated tussock management and receive feedback from professionals in pest management on how their programs can be improved or where assistance from other states can be provided.

The main focus of the meeting was to discuss and collate information for the Weeds of National Significance program review which serrated tussock is a part of. Reviews will be undertaken on all 20 Weeds of National Significance in the coming months to determine the extent to which National strategies have met their objectives and what level of Federal support is required for each of these species in the future.

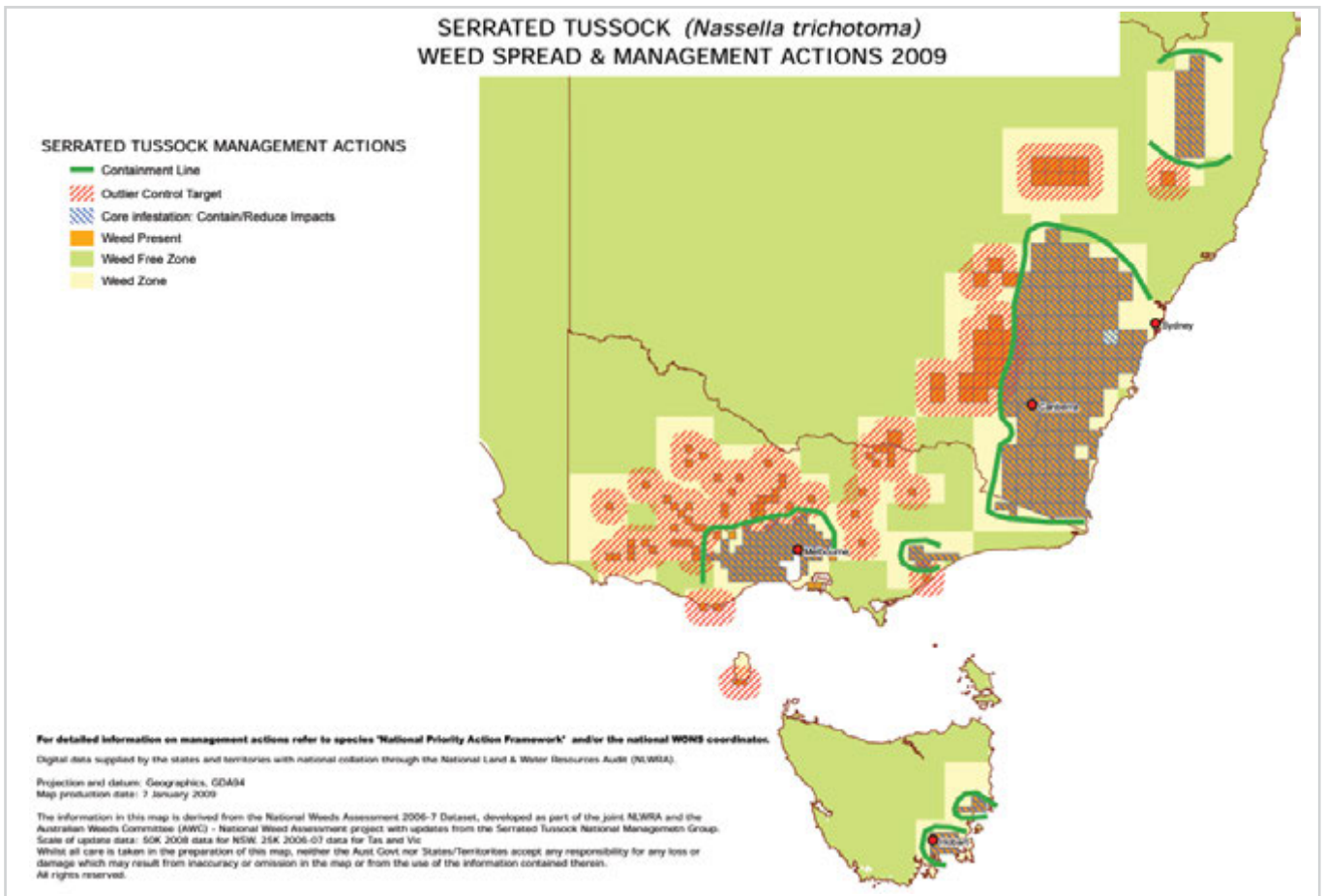
Providing Better Services to Farmers

On the 30th June 2009, the Chair and Executive Officer of the VSTWP attended a Better Services to Farmers Workshop in Bendigo to provide comment as a community group on the new DPI strategy.

The Brumby Government has committed \$8 million over four years from its Future Farming Strategy to review and implement improvements to agricultural services to assist farmers make more informed decisions in a changing global environment.

Agriculture Minister, Joe Helper, said the entire farm sector was facing new pressures and some emerging opportunities.

(Continued on page 7)



Providing Better Services to Farmers (cont)

“The Brumby Government recognises today’s farming environment is very different to the one that existed even 5 years ago, therefore we are taking action to ensure our services best suit current needs,” he said.

“To meet future challenges, we need to ensure our agricultural services are better targeted, more accessible and relevant.”

“Our aim is to see the farm sector grow to become more productive, competitive and sustainable.”

“As a result of the review, the Department of Primary Industries is modernising its service delivery model, based on the principles outlined in the Brumby Government’s Future Farming Strategy.”

Changes will include:

- *Delivering services tailored to meet the needs of farming families and small and large farm businesses*
- *Piloting a range of service options to farm businesses including online support tools and mobile computing*
- *Partnerships formed with local community providers and private sectors in an environment of cooperation, not competition, and*
- *Increasing the ability of DPI field staff to provide information within a “whole farm” systems perspective to enable better decision making.*

DPI’s executive director of Farm Services Victoria, Ron Harris said the changes could see stronger partnerships formed as private sector providers including community groups, to build the overall capability of the service provider sector and improve services to farmers.

“Over the next three to six months, we will start to see DPI working more collaboratively with other service providers, which will be formalised in partnership arrangements,” he said.

“This will help to ensure that consistently reliable information and advice is more accessible to more farmers.”

“Throughout the review, the farming sector has been consulted about how services should be directed.”

On the 30th June 2009, the Chair and Executive Officer of the VSTWP attended one of several Better Services to Farmers stakeholder workshops in Bendigo to provide comment as a community group on the new Better Services to Farmers Strategy.

VSTWP Executive Officer

Byron Crowe, Executive Officer for the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party and Statewide Coordinator of the Serrated Tussock Program has taken extended leave from the Department of Primary Industries.

Byron’s contributions to the serrated tussock program over the years have been greatly appreciated and the VSTWP looks forward to working with Byron again in 18 months time.

Chelsea Wardrope, the Partnerships Officer for Serrated Tussock will be acting in his position until December 2010.

Chelsea can be contacted on (03) 5226 4680 or by emailing Chelsea.wardrope@dpi.vic.gov.au

Upcoming Events:

A two day course on spray droplet: measurement; delivery; drift; adhesion, and uptake

The aim of the course is to up-skill people responsible for training/information transfer at all levels in the safe and effective use of pesticides and to evaluate new and /or existing products.

The workshop includes a number of information sessions, including: providing an update on the status of national/international protocols relating to droplet spectra measurement and how they may affect spray classification and proposed APVMA drift models: presenting fundamental information on target structure, to the micro level, and advise how this may influence efficient effective product delivery, and: detailing ways of measuring the physical parameters of spray liquids and suggest ways in which they can be manipulated to maximise retention, deposit structure and uptake. This is not an exhaustive list.

The workshop will be run on ***Tuesday, October 13 and Wednesday, October 14, 2009 at the DPI Attwood office.*** A number of noted industry specialists will be involved, including a presentation by key note speaker David Nuyttens, Doctor in Bioscience Engineering at the Catholic University of Leuven.

For more information, please contact Nickie Berrisford, Executive Officer GITN/Coordinator PinG, on (03) 5226 4075 or 0428 622 655, or email nickie.berrisford@dpi.vic.gov.au

Notifications:

“Become a Member of the VSTWP”

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) is looking for a new member to join its team of highly skilled volunteers that have a statewide focus on serrated tussock management.

The VSTWP is comprised of community representatives working in partnership with a range of stakeholders including; the Department of Primary Industries, Port Phillip and Corangamite Catchment Management Authorities, Municipal Association of Victoria and Department of Sustainability and Environment.

The group reports to Government on the progress of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy ‘Intensifying the attack on serrated tussock 2005-2010.’

The VSTWP is responsible for the following:

- *providing direction to serrated tussock programs across the state delivered by state and local Governments*
- *the submission and/or support of serrated tussock funding applications that impact on the implementation of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy*
- *Providing information to the wider community to raise awareness and build land manager capacity to respond to serrated tussock*
- *the funding of serrated tussock research and giving support to other research projects associated with serrated tussock control*
- *the funding of a serrated tussock partnerships officer*
- *the development of documents to supplement the Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy.*

Members are required to attend VSTWP quarterly meetings held in Geelong, Bacchus Marsh and Melbourne (attendance and other expenses paid). Occasionally commitment outside of meetings is required for the review, comment and endorsement of documents or presenting VSTWP information at other groups with which you may be associated.

The VSTWP invites nominations from people who have had experience in managing serrated tussock. Self nominations or nominations of friends and colleges are encouraged.

For further information please contact Chelsea Wardrope on (03) 5226 4680 or email chelsea.wardrope@dpi.vic.gov.au

Thank you to those who contributed to this edition of the Tussock Times newsletter. If you would like to contribute a story to our next edition in October 2009 please contact Chelsea Wardrope by 18th September 2009.

Add yourself or friends to the Tussock Times mailing list by contacting:

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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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