

tussock times

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\$19,000 for community groups to deliver serrated tussock extension

The VSTWP will be distributing over \$19,000 to community groups in the Corangamite Catchment to deliver serrated tussock extension in priority areas.

The VSTWP extension project, funded by Caring for our Country Community Action Grants will financially support eligible community groups in Corangamite to deliver localised extension programs with the vision to increase voluntary management of serrated tussock on private land.

The project aims to build the capacity of communities to manage serrated tussock with minimal reliance on the Department of Primary Industries compliance program.

Through evaluation, the project will compare the levels of voluntary management of the species with community delivering the extension program and compare these results to those obtained by the Department of Primary Industries extension and compliance program operating in areas with similar demographics.

“Peer and community pressure are important motivators encouraging landholders to control serrated tussock but Department of Primary Industries compliance must still remain an integral part of our program to protect the



Pictured: Michelle Freeman from the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Executive Officer of the VSTWP, Chelsea Wardrope.

investment of landholders voluntarily managing serrated tussock,” said Chair of the VSTWP, Jim Seager.

By delivering extension to landholders, the grants will help protect some areas of Corangamite against the invasion of serrated tussock. For other areas funding will be used to contain serrated tussock to the core infestation or eradicate isolated infestations.

Funding will be available for capacity building activities such as field days, property visits to develop long term management plans, map infestations, produce extension material and develop partnerships.

Community groups will need to apply to the VSTWP for funding. Funding applications will open in April 2010 and information will be available at www.serratedtussock.com

\$100,000 fine warning to all – Helper

A massive fine handed to a Victorian company for failing to control serrated tussock on its property is a stark reminder about the potential damage of the weed, Agriculture Minister Joe Helper said.

Mr Helper said the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) were successful in prosecuting Whittlesea Properties Pty Ltd with one charge of ‘failing to comply with a Land Management Notice to control the regionally controlled weed’ and one charge of ‘failing to notify of works undertaken’ on its 100 hectare property at Western Highway, Rockbank.

“Serrated tussock currently covers more than two million hectares of land in south-east Australia and has the potential to spread even further,” Mr Helper said.

“Modelling suggests that it could infest around 32 million hectares if we don’t continue to work together to control it.”

Whittlesea Properties Pty Ltd were convicted and fined \$29,000 plus ordered to pay costs of \$70,800.

Mr Helper said most of the \$70,000 in costs were incurred when DPI engaged contractors to treat the serrated tussock on the property to prevent any further spread of the weed.



A seeding Serrated Tussock plant

“DPI, in conjunction with the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party and local government is working to assist all landowners to control serrated tussock and minimise the impact of weeds on Victoria’s environment,” he said.

“But when all offers of help, technical advice and encouragement are ignored and a notice is served, we will take action.”

Magistrate Frank Jones described it as the worst case of serrated tussock neglect that he had ever dealt with.

“This company has a long history of neglecting their responsibilities to control serrated tussock on their land and this cannot be tolerated,” he said.

The estimated annual cost of weeds to Australian agriculture is \$4 billion per year through yield losses and product contamination.

Landcare take responsibility for tussock extension in priority areas

Four Landcare networks in the Corangamite Catchment have been given funding from the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA) to deliver serrated tussock extension and raise the awareness of landholders in priority areas.

The Lismore Land Protection Group, Upper Barwon Landcare Network, Leigh Catchment Group and the Surf Coast and Inland Plains Landcare Network are trialling projects in areas where serrated tussock exists as isolated infestations or is in proximity to these.

The project aims to provide community education about the Weed of National Significance to landholders unaware of the impact serrated tussock can have if left unmanaged or unnoticed.

The four Landcare networks have consulted with the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) to ensure project areas of DPIs extension and compliance program do not interfere with those projects being managed by Landcare.

Funding provided to the four Landcare networks has been used to pay for a Landcare coordinator to undertake property inspections if requested, provide literature, map infestations, run extension activities such as field days and develop partnerships with local and regional organisations.

The trial pilot projects have so far been very successful with several reports of serrated tussock sightings being made by landholders.

A large infestation was reported to DPI by a vigilant landholder in Lismore. Thankfully the suspected infestation on the railway corridor was mistaken for the native tussock, *Poa labillardieri*. Landholders are strongly encouraged to report any suspected serrated tussock sightings to the DPI.

Lack of hygiene spreads serrated tussock to popular tourist destination

By Emily Davies, Department of Primary Industries

A lack of vehicle hygiene and the trafficking of topsoil have created the newest Great Ocean Road attraction – at least for DPI Officers - Serrated tussock!

Three new infestations of serrated tussock have been found along the scenic road at Moggs Creek, Fairhaven and Anglesea. These were discovered by local Landcare groups and were reported to the DPI customer service centre on 136 186.

Before this discovery, there are only minor infestations of serrated tussock known outside of the Torquay area. An extension and compliance program has been implemented to eradicate the weed from these areas.

Inspections in Fairhaven revealed an extensive serrated tussock infestation with 40 plants in a holiday house driveway, which serves as an important reminder to maintaining good vehicle hygiene.

Under the Catchment and Land Protection Act it is illegal to spread noxious weed plants and seeds either deliberately or accidentally, with landholders being responsible for controlling serrated tussock where it occurs.

Neighbouring properties in Moggs Creek had as many as 60 serrated tussock plants on the front lawn, appearing to be up to four years old.

The Department of Primary Industries are treating these infestations as isolated infestations which are a priority for eradication.

Pictured: Emily Davies from the Department of Primary Industries practicing good vehicle hygiene.



Model helps find new serrated tussock plants

Spatial modelling has contributed to the discovery of three new infestations of the noxious weed serrated tussock in the Hamilton - Pierrepont area.

The new infestations are on properties that had not previously been known to contain this Regionally Prohibited Weed (RPW).

The finds were aided by a new computer biometric modelling system which can map the potential extent and spread of plants through wind-borne seed dispersal.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) tested the process on serrated tussock as part of the \$205 million Future Farming Strategy launched by the Victorian Government to reduce the threat of regionally prohibited weeds.

Pest Management Officer, Malinda Godino, said surveillance was vital in determining the spread of weeds and has traditionally involved staff intensively inspecting around known weed infestations.

“Biometric models can assist in predicting the direction and distance of the spread of weeds which are dispersed by wind,” Ms Godino said.

“Modelling also has the ability to calculate the probability of finding new infestations within a particular survey area.

“Using five years of localised Bureau of Meteorology wind direction and velocity data, including days during the seeding period that contained less than 5 mm of rain, the model was tested on three known infestations in the Hamilton - Pierrepont region.

“Staff inspected areas where the model predicted a 15-100 per cent probability of seed being spread from known infestations. This spanned a total of 49 properties covering about 250 hectares.

“As part of this process the model accurately predicted that three new properties would contain serrated tussock and we learned that correctly predicting spread requires running the model from the location of an original infestation.

“The model is overlaid from original points to create zones from which surveillance will most likely expose new infestations. The next step in this process will involve comparing the costs and benefits of both systems to find the most efficient and effective method,” she said. *(Continued on page 4)*

Model helps find new serrated tussock plants (cont)

“It may be that a combination of biometric modelling and vigilant monitoring is the strongest attack.

“Ultimately, everyone has a role to play – by working together and using tools such as biometric modelling, the government, industry and community can best protect Victoria from invasive plants such as serrated tussock.”



Pictured: Malinda Godino from the Department of Primary Industries finds an isolated serrated tussock plant in the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment.

Serrated tussock - infestation to inferno

Infestations of the Weed of National Significance, serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*), have the potential to become an inferno in summer. This is a new threat from the weed that already causes major problems for farmers by reducing stock carrying capacity and to the environment by reducing grassland biodiversity.

Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Officer Caleb Hurrell said many people may not realise that it’s also a serious fire hazard that can have an affect on the frequency and intensity of fires.

“Trials indicate serrated tussock burns with an intensity up to seven times greater than grasslands,” Mr Hurrell said.

“In the fire season, landowners need to be aware of the added fire risk posed by weeds such as serrated tussock. A build up of seed heads creates an additional hazard to housing, sheds and roadsides, with the greatest risk area in the urban rural interface.”

CFA Fuel Management Facilitator Anthony Watt said it is important for people living in rural and bushland settings to be aware of the type of grasses around the homes, in the paddocks and along the roadsides.

“Native grasses can reduce fire risks because they don’t burn as fiercely as introduced species, such as serrated tussock,” Mr Watt said. “This is particularly important along roadsides where weeds are pushing out native grasses and why we need to continue to burn roadsides for bushfire reduction.”

Caleb Hurrell said landowners and managers are legally responsible for controlling weeds and for the fire safety of all people on their property.

“Under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994, it is the responsibility of landowners to take all reasonable steps to prevent the growth and spread of regionally controlled weeds on their land.”

“Summer is a great time to map existing serrated tussock infestations because it is often highly visible in paddocks,” Mr Hurrell said.

“During summer it produces masses of weeping purple seed heads that bend over and eventually blow away spreading seed up to 20 kilometres.”

“Maintaining a healthy cover of perennial pasture by reducing stocking rates over summer is the key to preventing serrated tussock infestations. Control options include hand removal, cultivation and herbicide application dependant on local conditions.”

Works during the fire danger period must consider the associated fire danger and be in accordance with fire restrictions.

DPI is taking action as part of the Future Farming Strategy launched by the Victorian Government last year to ensure local communities work together to tackle species specific weed eradication projects.

For more information in relation to pest plant and animal management visit the DPI website www.dpi.vic.gov.au or call the customer service centre on 136 186.

Cocksfoot establishment surprise

By Lisa Miller, Department of Primary Industries

Successful establishment of cocksfoot at the Ballan EverGraze Support Site has producers excited at the prospects of revegetating non-arable areas in low rainfall climates.

At the October EverGraze field day, producers inspected small demonstration plots and a paddock of cocksfoot sown by the property owner, Scott Young.

Lisa Miller, DPI Geelong and the EverGraze Support Site Co-ordinator, said that the non arable paddock no longer contained native grasses and was planned to be aerially sown with the new cocksfoot cultivars Uplands and Yarck. But it was deemed too risky to do the total paddock when rainfall for the year up until the end of June was only 145mm and the forecasts were for a dry spring. Instead, small demonstration plots were aerial sown at the Support Site and a more arable 10ha paddock was sown with a pasture drill.

"We were surprised at how well the aerial sown demonstration plots grew," said Lisa. "Good weed control and sowing into damp cool conditions with rainfall occurring for three weeks post sowing were considered the reasons for the success," she added.

Lisa said that aerial sown seed sitting on the soil surface can reduce the chances of germination.

"When the first root sprouts from surface sown seed, it has to find its way into the ground to obtain moisture. It is during this time that the germinating seed is most vulnerable to drying out and being harvested by ants," she said.

Lisa said cocksfoot was selected instead of phalaris because it had naturally self seeded in parts of the gorge, indicating its suitability to the site. It also has better seedling vigour and establishes more readily from aerial seeding.

In the main 10ha paddock, cocksfoot varieties of 'Uplands' and 'Yarck' were direct drilled. The Spanish cocksfoot Uplands, was chosen for its ability



Field day participants inspect the results of direct drilling cocksfoot into a serrated tussock infested paddock



Great establishment of Upland's cocksfoot from broadcasting at the small demonstration plots.

to survive in low rainfall. Yarck, a new variety selected from Porto, is suited to a 500 mm rainfall environment and was sown for its improved seedling vigour. A variety of species were aerially sown in the small demonstration plots, but also included Uplands and Yarck.

Careful grazing management is planned to favour cocksfoot and discourage serrated tussock seedling survival. The demonstrations have given Scott and Lisa confidence that serrated tussock infested areas of the gorge can be restored with competitive species.

A farm walk is planned for next autumn to see how the cocksfoot plants have survived their first summer. For further information contact Lisa Miller at Geelong DPI by phoning 5226 4070 or visit our website www.evergraze.com.au
EverGraze is a Future Farm Industries CRC, MLA and AWI research and delivery partnership.

Employment opportunity with the VSTWP

Are you a good communicator, have experience in community education and have a sound knowledge of serrated tussock?

The VSTWP are looking for an extension officer to work part time delivering extension to targeted communities in the Corangamite and Port Phillip and Westernport Catchments.

The successful applicant will host field days and other extension events, conduct property inspections, map infestations, educate land managers on identification, prevention and control methods and develop effective partnerships with local and regional organisations.

Applicants must have their own ABN number and have access to a diesel four wheel drive.

Applications for this position will open in April 2010. For more information please visit www.serratedtussock.com or contact Chelsea Wardrope on 0448 537 094 or email Chelsea.wardrope@dpi.vic.gov.au.

Photos wanted

Serrated tussock is a difficult and expensive pest plant to control but despite this success can be achieved and we want to prove it to you.

The VSTWP would like to collect your before, during and after photos of controlling serrated tussock.

With your permission the VSTWP would like to use your photos along with a short story in the Tussock Times, on the website and in other

publications. Your story may encourage others to adopt similar practices and share in your success.

Taking photos of your work will not only help you evaluate the work you've done but they will also help us evaluate our statewide serrated tussock program and with your permission your photos may be used in reporting to the State Government.

Share your achievements with others by sending your photos and a brief background to Chelsea Wardrope at Chelsea.wardrope@dpi.vic.gov.au or call 0448 537 094.

Proof of successful control in a difficult spot

The first photo taken in 1998 shows a property in Moorabool heavily infested with serrated tussock. The steep gorges were home to a high density of mature serrated tussock plants which easily released their seed to high winds rushing through the non arable country.

With the assistance of the East Moorabool Landcare Group and their project 'Moorabool Gorge Revegetation Project,' now called the 'Moorabool Gorge Recovery Program' this property was transformed by the community using a strategic long term management plan.

The long term management plan included;

- *aerial spraying with flupropanate*
- *follow up spot spraying*
- *revegetation with native trees*
- *the planting of a tree shelter belt at the top of the gorge to prevent seed spread to clean paddocks*
- *using grazing management techniques to keep stock out of heavily infested areas*
- *treatment of invasive plants such as pattersons curse which invaded bare ground after controlling serrated tussock*

The second photo was taken in 2010, twelve years after the long term management plans were implemented. During that time, the property has had three different land owners and managers but despite this the property is still being closely managed and germinating tussocks are controlled quickly before they become a problem.



Photos taken of a property in Moorabool at the same location in 1998 and 2010. Photos supplied by Jim Seager, Chair VSTWP.



Wyndham City Council

By Peter Gibbs, Wyndham City Council

In 2009 Wyndham City Council completed an extensive mapping program of priority weeds, including serrated tussock on Wyndham's rural roadsides.

The maps will:

- be converted to a layer on Council's GIS program
- replace the 1999-2006 version maps used in Council's draft Roadside Maintenance Guidelines
- be used to evaluate the increase or decrease of roadside weed infestations from previous mapping programs
- be available for utility services that work on roadsides, and
- be used to assist Council with directing its on-ground roadside weed control works.

The 2009 weed mapping partnership program was funded by Council and the Department of Primary Industries under its Future Farming Initiative Project – Building the Capacity of Local government to respond to Pests.

Council has been successful in securing \$22,000 funding from the DPI for the control of regionally controlled weeds on roadsides in 2010 and an additional \$5,000 of DPI funding for weed hygiene training for Council's road maintenance staff.

Upcoming Events

Wednesday 7th April 2010

Identifying and controlling serrated tussock and Chilean needle grass field day, Moolap

Greening Australia in partnership with the Department of Primary Industries and Alcoa Australia are holding a field day for all interested land holders/ managers in the Geelong area. The aim of the day is to assist in the identification and control of Chilean Needle Grass and Serrated Tussock. As part of the day the opportunity exists for land holders to obtain assistance in the development of a weed management plan for their property.

Starts 9:45am

Windmill Road, Moolap (off Point Henry Road)

Vic Roads Reference: 93 H4

RSVP: 31st March 2010 for catering purposes

To register please contact Rod White from Greening Australia on 0447 585 574 or email rwhite@gavic.com.au

This is a free event and morning tea will be provided.

Wednesday 7th April 2010

Weeds and horses field day

Information on pasture improvement, weeds and horse nutrition

7:00pm onwards

Gisbourne Golf Club, Daly Street,
Gisbourne, VIC 3437

Melways Map 197 Ref C10

Bookings via Gisbourne Veterinary Clinic
(03) 5428 2805

This is a free event

Wednesday 14th April 2010

Serrated tussock information session, Garibaldi

Hosted by the Leigh Catchment Group

7:30pm onwards

Garibaldi Hall, Mount Mercer Shelford Road,
Garibaldi.

5km south of Bunnyong or 15km south
of Ballarat

Please RSVP to Jenny Ryle on (03) 5341 2364

This is a free event

Sunday 18th April 2010

Serrated tussock information session, Modewarre

Hosted by the Surf Coast and Inland Plains
Landcare Network

- Enhance your serrated tussock identification skills
- Discuss appropriate serrated tussock management control
- Bring a 'suspicious' plant along to get clarification

11.30am -12.30pm

followed by BBQ lunch & plant Identification
Modewarre Bluestone Landcare Centre
(910 Cape Otway Rd, Modewarre)

RSVP by 11th April 2010 to:

Surf Coast and Inland Plains Network

Ph : 03 5266 1707

Mobile : 0429 483 691

Email: scipn@bigpond.com

This is a free event

Funding Available

Caring for our Country

Open call proposals for projects between \$20,000 and \$300,000 and delivered over 3 years. Applications close Thursday 15th April 2010.

It is anticipated that the 2010-11 Community Action Grants round will open for applications in July 2010.

For more information on Caring for our Country please visit www.nrm.gov.au.

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party would like to offer their full support for any serrated tussock related projects. For assistance with these applications or for written support from the VSTWP please contact Chelsea Wardrope on 0448 537 094 or email Chelsea.wardrope@dpi.vic.gov.au.

Contributions & Feedback

Thank you to those who contributed to this edition of the Tussock Times newsletter. Feedback on this newsletter and contributions to the next edition in June 2010 are welcome to Chelsea Wardrope.

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

Chelsea Wardrope
Serrated Tussock Program Coordinator
Department of Primary Industries

Phone: 0448 537 094

Mail: PO Box 103, Geelong VIC 3220

Email: chelsea.wardrope@dpi.vic.gov.au

In our efforts to reduce the number of newsletters being printed if you currently receive a hardcopy of this newsletter but have access to email please send your email address to Chelsea.

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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