

TUSSOCK TIMES

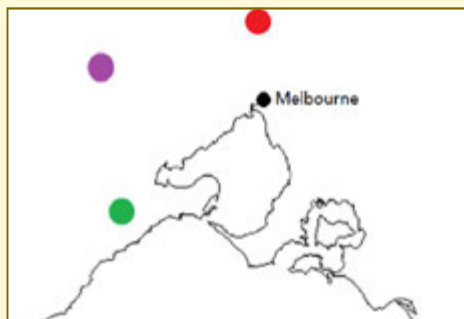
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Current VSTWP Extension Projects:
Mt Doran in purple, Winchelsea (Buckley)
in green and Riddells Creek in red.

MT DORAN PROJECT LAUNCHED

Despite some inauspicious weather for the field day at the Meredith Cemetery to launch the project, the VSTWP are making some good progress in the fight against serrated tussock in the new Mt Doran target area.

VSTWP Extension Officer Roger McRaild is implementing the project and has ensured some strong partnerships are in place to pave the way for effective treatment across the target area. Infestations found on public land and roadsides have already been treated, with the Moorabool Shire Council committing to a long-term treatment strategy.

In addition the Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group has on offer an attractive incentive for

landholders in the area to treat serrated tussock. The offer includes 100% reimbursement of treatment costs if landholders conduct the works or 50 % of the cost of a contractor. Extension Officer Roger McRaild said "This is an incredible offer that landholders in other areas would be quite envious of."

The VSTWP will continue the initial visits to the landholders in the Mt Doran area over the coming months, and it is hoped that landholders will make the most of the free inspection and tailored extension advice on offer.

McRaild noted "I've seen some infestations down in the Morrisons area from the roadside that need attention, and I look forward to working with those landholders to assess the scale of the problem and finding the best course of action to remove this scourge to productivity and Biodiversity".



Serrated tussock found on a rural roadside in the Mt Doran target area . (Source: Roger McRaild)



EXTENSION CONTINUES IN THE BUCKLEY REGION

Following a string of consecutive years working with landholders in the Barunah Plains, Wingeel, North Winchelsea areas, the VSTWP has recently vigilantly worked throughout the Buckley and Modewarre areas, providing serrated tussock extension to 224 properties covering an area of 5727 ha.

VSTWP Extension Officer Mandy Coulson said “that of the 5727ha, only approximately 35ha contained serrated tussock of 5-8% density”. Mandy’s role involved one-to-one property visits, detailed extension and education where required, GPS recordings of serrated tussock plants, detailed reporting of each property visit and when warranted the development of long-term treatment plans.

The project area included the eastern boundary of the Winchelsea township, Lake Modewarre and Lake Gherang. All serrated tussock infestations on public land were also mapped and provided to public land managers to engage weed control contractors.

Extension Officer Mandy Coulson said that “cropping is a common farming practice in this area which has had significant contribution to the relatively low number of serrated tussock plants. Where grazing was undertaken serrated plants were sometimes found in scattered and low-medium densities”.

Of particular interest was Lake Gherang, managed by Parks Victoria, which bounds 13 private properties. Although quite low-lying and covered in native tussock grass, a small patch of serrated tussock plants were found on its south western boundary. Once informed, Parks Victoria immediately engaged a contractor to remove the infestation.

Mandy Coulson noted that “the Extension Officer role has been well received within the Buckley/Lake Modewarre catchment and that follow up in the coming years on known serrated tussock hotspot areas will be critical for the project’s success”.

2012—2013 ANNUAL REPORT NOW AVAILABLE

The VSTWP 2012-13 Annual Report is now available to view online at www.serratedtussock.com

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party’s Annual Report provides a snapshot of the important work the Working Party is involved with, and contains information on the projects undertaken and some of the achievements over the last financial year.



VSTWP PRESENTING AT THE WEED SOCIETY OF VICTORIA CONFERENCE

The Weed Society of Victoria is holding its 5th Biennial Weed Conference in Geelong from May 13th—15th.

The Working Party has submitted a paper focusing on its Targeted Extension Program. The paper will be published in the Conference proceedings and presented at the Conference on Wednesday 14th May.

RIDDELLS CREEK TACKLES SERRATED TUSSOCK

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) has provided a successful serrated tussock extension program to support landholders to the south and east of the Riddells Creek township. The project continued on from the recent extension project in the Clarkefield area, and has improved knowledge and identification skills for treating serrated tussock.

Starting in October 2013, the project offered the 189 landholders in the target area the opportunity to attend an information session, receive educational advice, have their property assessed and mapped for serrated tussock infestations, and apply for potential financial assistance.

The outcomes from the project have seen landholders conduct treatment on approximately 150 hectares of serrated tussock across the target area and also improve their knowledge on how to identify the invasive plant.

VSTWP Extension Officer Ivan Carter said he "mostly found scattered serrated tussock infestations during the inspections in the Riddells Creek area, which left untreated will rapidly decrease biodiversity in native grasslands and seriously reduce the agricultural



Serrated tussock infestation treated along Jacksons Creek during the project *Source: Ivan Carter*

capacity of properties". Carter also noted that "there were also some areas of dense serrated tussock, which was both concerning and detrimental to the local agricultural and environmental assets of the region."

The recent fires around the Clarkefield, Sunbury and Riddells Creek areas have impacted the target area, with some areas burnt by the fires, including Stage 2 of the project area. As a result, the commencement of this stage has been delayed 5 months, and will commence in Spring 2014.

Ivan Carter said that "landholders are reminded that monitoring, early detection and treatment of weeds is important after fire. A hot fire will not kill adult serrated tussock plants, it will remove biomass (the thatch) and destroy surface seed, however buried seed is largely unaffected and fire stimulates the mass germination of serrated tussock seed".

The VSTWP will commence Stage 2 of the Riddells Creek Extension Project in August 2014 and will launch the project with an information day in July.



The waterways of Jackson Creek and Riddells Creek. *Source: Ivan Carter*

DEPI TARGET COMPLIANCE IN THE GLENELG HOPKINS CATCHMENT

Biosecurity Officers from the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) have been tackling serrated tussock in the Hamilton and Dunkeld areas for many years. In collaboration with the local Shire, linear reserve managers and landholders, they claim to have contained serrated tussock from escaping into the surrounding landscape.

The Glenelg-Hopkins serrated tussock program has been identified as one of the most important programs in the state. The area fosters highly suitable growing conditions for the species to potentially cause significant impact to the highly productive agricultural systems of the western district.

DEPI now implement two compliance programs annually across 83 properties covering 5,500 hectares, with all landholders and public land managers involved. The winter program captures the start of the growing season for the species and the summer program captures germinations arising from summer rains.

DEPI officers undertake initial property inspections to determine the plants presence, and issue notices as required to attain compliance. Last spring 17 land management notices were issued to ensure compliance and treatment of all plants.

This year DEPI implemented the summer compliance program in early January capturing any germination which had been staggered over the late spring/summer period. In some instances DEPI officers found more plants present during the summer compliance program than the spring program. Identifying and treating the summer germinates reduces seed set, therefore minimising the risk of spread.

Local DEPI officers, landholders and the local Landcare group are passionate about the eradication of serrated tussock from the region. The serrated tussock infestations in the region are the most western occurrence of this species in Victoria and Australia; therefore it is critical for all stakeholders to maintain momentum for treatment of this highly invasive species.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND FEEDBACK

Thank you to those who contributed to this edition of the Tussock Times.

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party welcomes your contributions and feedback at any time.

For contributions, feedback or to be added to or removed from the mailing list, please contact:

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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 provide your email address to the Executive Officer.

More information on serrated tussock can be found on the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party website:

www.serratedtussock.com

or at DEPI online: www.depi.vic.gov.au

or by contacting DEPI on 136 186.

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