

TUSSOCK TIMES

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*A serrated tussock plant recovers after the intense Sunbury grassfires in February 2014.
Source: Ivan Carter*

FIRE STIMULATES SERRATED TUSSOCK

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) has recently begun implementing Stage 2 of the Riddells Creek Serrated Tussock Extension Project, made possible through a Caring for Our Country Federal Government grant.

The Stage 2 project area is located south and west of the Riddells Creek township and includes 160 landowners.

Approximately 60% of the target area was impacted by grassfires earlier in the year, with many paddocks scorched back to bare earth.

Six months on and VSTWP Extension Officer Ivan Carter is unfortunately discovering that nearly all of the serrated tussock plants have partially or fully recovered after the fire, despite many landowners believing the plants would have been killed by the extreme heat.

“We are noticing, during property assessments, that many of the burnt serrated tussock plants are regrowing from their base, and new seedlings are emerging on the scorched ground between the regrowing plants.”

(continued on page 2)



FIRE STIMULATES SERRATED TUSSOCK *(continued)*

“Proving that serrated tussock can survive very hot fires to regrow from the existing root mass, and that fire promotes the germination of soil stored seed.” noted Mr Carter.

Following a fire, weeds often re-establish more quickly than desirable pasture and native species, and can rapidly dominate the landscape.

The VSTWP urge landowners to be prepared for significant regrowth of serrated tussock over the coming months and encourage appropriate control measures be taken to treat serrated tussock plants

before they reach maturity and produce seed in spring / summer.

Landowners should also note that fire can interfere with previous treatment programs by reducing the effectiveness of any residual herbicide in the soil.



Serrated tussock seedlings.

Source: Ivan Carter

VSTWP ENGAGE AT THE NATIONAL LANDCARE CONFERENCE

The VSTWP recently attended the three day National Landcare Conference at the Crown Conference Centre, taking the opportunity to engage with landowners, stakeholders and interest groups from all over Australia.

The first day of the Conference featured a variety of field trips, visiting examples of successful Landcare projects around the urban fringe of Melbourne. The second and third days offered an excellent array of presentations, informative talks and workshops.

VSTWP Extension Officer Mandy Coulson spoke during the field trips, on successful case studies and the integrated management approach to tackling serrated tussock.

A strong crowd of a few hundred were interested to learn how best to manage areas heavily infested with serrated tussock for the long term, with the aim of returning the land to productivity.

VSTWP Community Engagement Officer Ivan Carter spent two days at the Conference attending the VSTWP information booth, which was shared with the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce.

“Many interested landowners from across the country found the information provided by the VSTWP useful and informative to assist with better land management for productivity and biodiversity” said Mr Carter

Over 50 landowners sought information on the identification of serrated tussock, which is still a major hurdle for many landowners across the country.



VSTWP Community Engagement Officer Ivan Carter talks to concerned landowners at the National Landcare Conference.
Source: DEPI

SUCCESS! SERRATED TUSSOCK CONTROLLED AT SIMPSON BARRACKS

Simpson Barracks is located 18 kilometres north east of the Melbourne CBD in Watsonia. The site covers approximately 134 hectares and contains a range of botanical attributes with some areas supporting up to 90% indigenous vegetation cover including some rare and threatened taxa of national and state significance.

The site is considered to be of state significance in terms of flora and fauna values and it contains one of the largest intact stands of Plains Grassy Woodland in the Greater Melbourne area. Approximately 65 hectares of the Simpson Barracks site is managed as bushland which is used for static military training.

A targeted serrated tussock control program has been undertaken at Simpson Barracks since spring 2005 to both contain large infestations and reduce isolated occurrences.

Active management commenced on a large infestation (covering approximately one hectare) located along the site's Yallambie Road boundary. Initially an annual spot spraying program was

conducted by Defence which over a three year period saw the percentage cover of serrated tussock reduce from 90% to less than 5%.

Isolated serrated tussock infestations across the base have since been mapped to assist with ongoing targeted control. These isolated plants are now sprayed as part of the site's annual weed management program. An ongoing threat of reinfestation from external sources remains, particularly from adjoining nature strips, reserves and private properties.

Defence has also implemented a vehicle hygiene procedure for all military vehicles on site to reduce the likelihood of transferring weed seeds/material onsite and to other Defence bases across the state.



Left: 2005 – A cover of serrated tussock approaching 90% ground cover.



Right: 2014 – Scattered isolated plants at less than 5% ground cover.

Source: Department of Defence

CONGRATULATIONS TO VSTWP COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE, DR JOHN WEBB WARE



A big congratulations is in order for VSTWP community representative Dr John Webb Ware, who was recently awarded the Department of Environment and Primary Industries' (DEPI), Hugh McKay Partnership Award.

This award is 'to recognise a significant collaboration between DEPI and its industry partners to improve productivity and competitiveness in primary industries and/or support a resilient and healthy environment that assists Victoria's long term prosperity'.

'Dr Webb Ware specialises in farm management and analysis' and has been managing serrated tussock in the Clarkefield area for many years. He has also 'assisted the DEPI Beef and Sheep Networks, which have profoundly changed livestock enterprises across Victoria through increased profits and business sustainability'. Source DEPI

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

The VSTWP would like to invite you to attend their Annual General Meeting to be held on Wednesday 26th of November at Bacchus Marsh, at which time all committee positions will be vacated and a new committee formed.

The committee comprises 8 voluntary community representatives who work towards achieving the VSTWP vision: 'To control the spread of serrated tussock in Victorian and reduce the impacts on the economy, society and the environment' by overseeing the implementation of the objectives of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy 2012-2017.

Committee members are required to attend quarterly VSTWP meetings and may at times be requested to represent the VSTWP at external events, comment on documents, or present information to groups or communities impacted by serrated tussock.

Nominations for committee positions are currently being accepted, and the VSTWP encourages concerned community members and other key stakeholders interested in the management of serrated tussock to nominate.

If you would like to attend the AGM or are interested in nominating a suitable community member or organisation to become a committee representative, please contact the VSTWP Executive Officer on (03) 5366 0037.



VSTWP meeting.

Source: VSTWP.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND FEEDBACK

The VSTWP would like to thank the following people for contributing to this edition of the Tussock Times. Ivan Carter (VSTWP) and Narelle Liepa (Department of Defence).

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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Phone: (03) 5366 0000

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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 send 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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