

## WEED CONTROL IN THE RANGELANDS DISTRICT

# Managing pest plants

*Managing pest plants is important to help reduce their impact on the environment and to stop them from spreading further.*



A pest plant, or weed, is a plant that grows where it is not wanted. In most cases, agricultural or environmental pest plants have been introduced into an environment and become over abundant.

Pest plants often arrive unintentionally, carried into the district or onto properties by machinery, vehicles and animals, attached to clothing or footwear, or embedded in hay and fodder.

They can compete with crops and pasture for moisture and nutrients; contaminate crops; compete with native flora and fauna; reduce the agricultural and conservation value of the land; and in some cases they may be toxic to people, livestock and native animals.

Pest plants have a major impact on Australia's agricultural productivity and environment. Each year, more than four billion dollars is lost through decreased production and the cost of control programs.

## How are pest plants categorised?

Pest plants are categorised based on how invasive they are, their potential to spread and

their environmental, economic and social impact.

**Weeds of National Significance (WoNS)** are very invasive, high impact pest plants that are difficult to manage without a coordinated management program. There are 32 pest plants on the WoNS list and their management is coordinated nationally between all levels of government, as well as organisations like the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board and individual landholders.

**Alert List** weeds are declared plants not yet established in South Australia and pose a serious threat. Landowners must report alert weeds found on their property. Early detection is important so the plant can be destroyed before it becomes a problem. With appropriate intervention, Alert List weeds can be successfully contained or eradicated.

**Declared plants** are those that present a significant threat to agriculture, the environment and public health and safety. They are supported by legislation.

**Priority weeds** are not restricted to WoNS or declared plants, but have been identified as a priority plant to manage within a particular district or region.

## Whose responsibility?

Pest plants don't recognise property boundaries. By working collaboratively, the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board and landholders have the best chance of controlling priority pest plants in the Rangelands district.

Spread may take place by machinery, animals and clothing as well as in plant materials such as hay and fodder. It is important to make sure that vehicles, machinery and fodder are

free of weed seeds before they are allowed onto your property. It is much easier to stop pest plants from entering a property than controlling them once they've established, so it is important to be vigilant. Transporting declared plants and seeds is an offence.

Each pest plant has a different life cycle and characteristics. Management should be targeted for each plant type. Often, a combination of methods will be required to achieve effective control. Vehicle, plant and equipment hygiene is also important.

### Private land

Landholders have a legal responsibility, under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* (the Act) to control declared plants on their land. They should know their pest plants, their responsibilities and the resources that are available to them.

### On roadsides

Roadsides are part of public road reserves, which are owned by the Crown. Under the Act, regional landscape boards are responsible for ensuring that declared pest plants are controlled on roadsides.

Landholders are encouraged to control declared plants on roadsides that adjoin their property. Where the Board undertakes the work, under the Act, landholders may be issued with accounts.

As approvals may be required, landholders should contact the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board before undertaking control work on roadsides. Care should also be taken to avoid any off-target damage to native vegetation.

## Managing pest plants

The first step in managing pest plants is to find out which are present on a property. The Northern and Yorke Landscape Board offers a free plant identification service to help landholders determine if pest plants are present on their property.

Landholders should make themselves aware of plants in the region, as some may require

focused management, notification or destruction. Landholders must take appropriate action to control WoNS or declared plants.

The Northern and Yorke Landscape Board develops management plans for all the declared plants within the Rangelands district, and surveillance takes place to help spot any new plants that enter the district. Landscape Officers can provide landholders with the appropriate management method for each pest plant on your property.

Each plant has a different life cycle and characteristics so management is tailored to each plant type. Often a combination of methods is necessary to achieve effective pest plant control. PIRSA has published a Weed Control Handbook for Declared Plants in South Australia, which is available on their website: [www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity)

Under the Act, the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board can issue landholders with a notice to control declared plants on their property. If a landholder fails to comply with the requirements of a notice, the Landscape Board may enter the landholder's property and control the declared plants at the landholder's expense.

## Working together

By working together, the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board and landholders can take a coordinated and integrated approach to **notify, control and destroy** priority pest plants in our region.

Everyone needs to work together to stop new pest plants and control those already within our region.

## Priority plants in the Rangelands district

### African rue | Priority Weed



African rue (*Peganum harmala*) is a deep-rooted perennial shrub that competes with native vegetation and pasture. African rue also contains alkaloids that taste bitter to domestic and feral grazing animals and inhibit the germination and growth of other plants. It is drought tolerant and reproduces extensively via its small seeds. It is most common in watercourses and on roadsides north of Orroroo, but also occurs in small, localised patches elsewhere in the district.

### African boxthorn | Priority Weed - WoNS



The thorny bushes of African boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*) form impenetrable thickets that can become a problem along fence lines, and

watering points and disturbed areas; preventing stock access and crowding out desirable pasture plants. African boxthorn can also easily invade intact coastal areas and native vegetation. Seeds are spread in contaminated soil or produce, and by birds and mammals that eat the berries. It can also regrow from root segments.

### Buffel grass | Priority weed



Buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) is an introduced perennial pasture grass that can dominate the ground layer in many plant communities. Buffel grass has been planted in other

areas of Australia as a pasture plant and to minimise dust, but it can reduce plant diversity over time and pasture production may also reduce. Buffel grass is a major threat to

biodiversity in landscape management strategies and its seeds can be spread by wind, water and animals. Dry buffel grass foliage forms a continuous flammable ground layer that can carry extensive and intense fires. It can carry fire at much shorter intervals than native understory and the more frequent hot fires can alter native plant communities.

### Cape tulip | Priority Weed



One leaf cape tulip (*Moraea flaccida*) is only found in a localised area around Wilmington and as a small subsisting population near Hallett within the

Rangelands district. The plant has become a significant problem within the Mid North region and has potential to invade pastures throughout the rangeland district, posing risks to stock through its toxicity. Cape tulip is regarded as difficult to control due to its high corm output and long dormancies and as such containing its spread is a district priority.

### Devil's rope cactus | Priority weed



Devil's rope cactus (*Cylindropuntia imbricata*) is a tall, purple flowering cylindropuntia cactus found in small/medium clusters, particularly around

Wilmington, Wonna and Terowie. It forms dense, spiny thickets that are difficult to control using herbicide. Unable to produce seed but spreads easily vegetatively.

### Khaki weed | Priority Weed



Khaki weed (*Alternanthera pungens*) is a prostrate herb with a perennial root system and annual top growth. The seeds are either produced as a spiny

burr or a single spine. These can easily embed into tyres, shoes, clothing, animal fur and wool and spread over large areas. The stems of khaki weed can also form roots at the node and so patches can quickly grow in size. The



spines cause mouth and foot problems for grazing stock and working animals.

#### Noogoora burr | Priority weed



The Rangelands district has one known infestation of noogoora burr, in a location that can be specifically targeted for control. Given the infestation is in a water course, it is critical that it's contained to prevent spread into wider catchment areas.

#### Opuntia spp. | WoNS



Wheel cactus (*Opuntia robusta*) is the most common and persistent in the district, although drooping pear tree (*Opuntia moncantha*) and Riverina pear (*Opuntia elata*) are also present at levels of concern. Difficult to control, these weeds of national significance create dense thickets, reducing land value and amenity and causing injury to stock.

#### Silverleaf Nightshade | WoNS



Silverleaf nightshade (*Solanum elaeagnifolium*) has infested thousands of hectares of agricultural land in the Northern and Yorke region, reducing crop and pasture production. The perennial pest plant can also be toxic to stock and horses. Silverleaf nightshade is spread by seeds and root sections. It has large interconnecting root systems within colonies, which make it highly competitive and persistent in the environment. It is common across all LGAs within the Rangelands district.

## Other important weeds in the Rangelands district

#### Bathurst burr | Declared plant



Bathurst Burr (*Xanthium spinosum*) is a spiny, summer growing plant that removes moisture from the soil, contaminates wool, and restricts movement. It is found in localised infestations throughout much of the Rangelands District.

#### Creeping knapweed | Declared plant



Creeping knapweed (*Rhaponticum repens*) is a perennial herb that can grow up to one metre high. It has an extensive, creeping root system, and new plants can grow from sections of root that have broken off, although the plant is mainly spread by seed. Creeping knapweed is potentially poisonous to livestock and very difficult to eradicate once it is established.

#### Dog rose / Sweet briar | Declared plant



Dog rose (*Rosa canina*) and sweet briar (*R. rubiginosa*) is a scrambling, woody shrub. It forms dense, prickly thickets, reduce visibility on roadsides and invade pastures.

#### Horehound | Declared plant



Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*) is an erect or spreading bushy, aromatic perennial herb. Horehound thrives on poor soil and in waste places. It invades poor pastures where there is little competition, and is unpalatable for livestock. It is also an significant environmental weed because of its ability to invade disturbed native vegetation. It spreads by seed primarily dispersed by animals, as the burr readily attaches to wool, fur and clothing. Mature plants can produce in excess of 20,000 seeds/year.

### Innocent weed | Declared plant



Innocent weed (*Cenchrus longispinus* and *Cenchrus incertus*) is an annual grass that produces small, barbed burrs.

These burrs can contaminate wool, hides and seed crops, while heavy infestations can stop working dogs from being used in the area. The burrs can also become stuck in the mouths of grazing stock and cause ulcers. The pest plant spreads

### Lincoln weed | Declared plant



Lincoln weed (*Diplotaxis tenuifolia*) is an erect branching perennial herb. It reproduces by both taproot and seed. It is a weed of community and

agricultural concern. Seeds are spread by vehicles, machinery, hay and fodder products. Lincoln weed has a low level of susceptibility to herbicide if sprayed when not actively growing, often resulting in the need for re-treatment to obtain effective control.

### Wild artichoke | Declared plant



Wild artichoke (*Cynara cardunculus*) is a long-lived spiny weed of pasture and native grasslands, producing annual leaves and flowers from a large,

fleshy perennial taproot which grows up to 2m deep. Leaves mostly appear after autumn rains. Plants grow slowly over winter, then more rapidly in spring. Flower heads are blue to purple and approximately 10cm across. Each flower can produce 200 seeds.

### Our landscape officers can provide:

- A free weed identification service.
- Advice about the most appropriate weed control methods for your property.

## More information

Email: [ny.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au](mailto:ny.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au)  
Phone: 08 8841 3444

[www.landscape.sa.gov.au/ny](http://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/ny)