



REGIONAL WEED MANAGEMENT PLAN

1.1 PLAN TITLE: **Blackberry**

1.2 PLAN PROPONENTS

Regional weed advisory committee: Macquarie Valley Weeds Advisory Committee

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Signature: Chairman: Date:

1.3 NAME OF PLANT(S)

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Botanical name: *Rubus fruticosus* aggregate species Common name: Blackberry

1.4 PLAN PERIOD (not to exceed five years)

Starting date: 01/07/2008

Completion date: 30/06/2013

1.5 AREA OF OPERATION:

All Local Control Authorities (LCA's) and Rural Lands Protection Boards (RLPB's) of the Macquarie Valley Weeds Advisory Committee.

1.6 AIM

To successfully manage Blackberry in the Macquarie Valley.

1.7 OBJECTIVES

1.7.1 Considerably reduce impacts of existing weeds

1.7.2 Prevent new weed problems

1.7.3 Improve coordination and cooperation

1.7.4 Raise awareness of weeds issues within region

2.0 STAKEHOLDERS

2.1 SIGNATORIES

Participating Councils (LCA's):

- Cabonne Council
- Dubbo City Council
- Mid Western Regional Council
- Narromine Shire Council
- Orange City Council
- Parkes Shire Council
- Wellington Council

Participating County Council:

- Castlereagh Macquarie County Council
- Upper Macquarie County Council

Participating Rural Lands Protection Boards:

- Bourke
- Brewarrina
- Central Tablelands
- Coonabaraban
- Coonamble
- Dubbo
- Hillston
- Molong
- Moree
- Mudgee
- Narrabri
- Nyngan
- Walgett

2.2 OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

- NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI)
- State Forests
- NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) – National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)
- Department of Lands
- Catchment Management Authorities (CMA's)
- Regional Landcare Coordinators
- Aboriginal Lands Councils
- Service providers – Country Energy, Telstra, Australian Rail Track Corp (ARTC)

3.0 BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

3.1 PLAN JUSTIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION OF PROBLEM

Blackberry is an introduced species and a major problem of pastures, roadsides and native bushland where it displaces indigenous plants and wildlife habitat. It is highly invasive and may cover large areas with a dense canopy, dominating areas in a short period of time. The impenetrable, prickly thickets restrict access by people to streams for fishing and other recreational activities, animals to watering points, and provide ideal harbour for rabbits, foxes and other feral animals.

Blackberry is on the list of Weeds of National Significance, being in Australia's top twenty worst weeds. Recent surveys estimated that Blackberry was causing an annual loss in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania of well over \$50 million due to reduced production and the cost of control.

The lack of management of this weed would be seen as neglecting our duty to care for the region as most rural residents have some knowledge of blackberry and its associated problems. Part of this plan is to conduct an education program, which would assist landholders affected by blackberry while also letting the community know that something is being done to combat the problem.

3.2 THE 'DO NOTHING' OPTION

If blackberry was ignored the implications would be significant leading to:

- The degradation of prime grazing land in the higher rainfall areas of the State leading to production loss and reduced land prices
- The destruction of indigenous flora and fauna regimes
- The decimation of environmental and natural recreational areas
- The degradation of riparian zones
- Urban invasion especially backyards, vacant blocks and parkland

3.3 DISTRIBUTION OF INFESTATIONS

Blackberry occurs in all Australian States and Territories except the Northern Territory usually in the higher rainfall areas. In NSW blackberries are a major problem of pastures and native forests on the tablelands and coast as well as occurring commonly along streams and gullies, roadsides and neglected areas. On private land in the plan region, Cabonne and Wellington Councils have rare and isolated infestations in their eastern areas whilst Orange City and Mid Western Regional Council has scattered rare and isolated infestations over most of their areas. Mid Western Regional Council have several pockets of marginal infestations in the Mudgee and Rylstone areas and some core infestations in the Yarrabin area north of Goolma. Council controlled lands in the plan region are considered to have only rare and isolated infestations.

3.4 WEED BIOLOGY

Blackberry is a perennial, deciduous, woody shrub with an erect nature up to several metres high with trailing prickly stems. Leaves are dark green on the upper side and lighter green underneath with prickly stems. Clusters of pink to white flowers with 5 petals form at the end of short branches, developing into black seeded berries in summer. Reproduces from seed, root suckers and 'tip rooting' at the stem tips.

The size of clumps is increased when daughter plants develop on first year canes which take root in autumn, sometimes up to several metres from the crown, and when lateral roots sucker up to 2 metres from the edge of parent bushes. Flowering commences in November and extends through to February, and fruit is produced from January to March

3.5 METHOD AND RATE OF SPREAD

Blackberries can be spread by the following mechanisms:

- Animals, (such as foxes), humans and birds.
- Streams and rivers
- Layering and/or tip rooting.

Blackberry thrives on disturbed sites that are subsequently neglected. These areas include forestry sites, roadsides and creek banks.

The rate of spread in the plan area is slow but constant though established plants do have the ability to double their size in a short space of time.

3.6 SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Blackberry does not have many weaknesses allowing it to become an important weed both regionally and nationally. Biological control agents have been tried but with little success, whilst grazing practices using goats have proved an effective control method as they readily eat the plants and can destroy large bushes by their continuous grazing pressure. Generally, herbicide treatment is used to control blackberries, as it is the most practical and effective method of control. Often chemical application can be used after the physical removal of large

clumps of blackberries to reduce the bulk of the plant. The effect of herbicides is enhanced if the dead bushes are burnt several months after treatment. This opens up the area to grazing and competition from other pasture species.

3.7 KEY LAND MANAGERS

- LCA's
- RLPB's
- Landholders
- National Parks
- State Forests
- Department of Lands
- Service providers – Country Energy, ARTC
- RTA

4.0 LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY SITUATION

4.1 CURRENT DECLARATION

Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus* aggregate species except cultivars Black satin, Chehalem, Chester Thornless, Dirksen Thornless, Loch Ness, Murrindindi, Silvan, Smoothstem, Thornfree) is declared a class 4 noxious weed throughout NSW: The growth and spread of the plant must be controlled according to the measures specified in a management plan published by the local control authority and the plant may not be sold, propagated or knowingly distributed.

4.2 DECLARATION CHANGES

No alteration to the existing declaration is anticipated.

5.0 CONSIDERATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

5.1 FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO CARRY OUT THE PLAN

Funding opportunities will be investigated through:

- Catchment Management Authorities
- NHT funding using an environmental slant
- Local Control Authorities
- Department of Lands i.e. control of blackberries on Vacant Crown Land
- Rural Land Protection Boards
- Relevant landholders

5.2 LINKS TO OTHER STRATEGIES

This Regional Blackberry Management Plan addresses issues raised in the:

- Australian Weed Strategy
- NSW Invasive Species Plan
- MVWAC Regional Weed Strategy
- Central West Catchment Management Authority Blueprint

5.3 BARRIERS AND CONTINGENCIES

Barriers

- Adjacent land use – vineyards, organic or chemically sensitive crops place restrictions on any proposed control program
- Spray contractors unwilling to apply chemical near sensitive areas.
- Lack of follow-up work – resulting in a less effective control program.

- Dispersal mechanisms – spread of seeds by feral animals and birds.
- Inaccessibility - rough country, locked gates, absentee landholders
- Waterways – the use of chemicals along waterways, and reluctance by landholders to use chemical near water in case they are prosecuted.
- Lack of biological agents – effective enough to be of use to occupiers of land
- Difficult/absentee landholders – will not support the plan; will not carry out control work.
- Seed bank – existing seed bank will continue to germinate after initial treatments

Contingencies

- Drought – the continuation of the drought will make the enforcement of any Section 18 notices difficult, and make the application of any herbicides less effective.
- Lack of funding – not enough money to complete the plan’s objectives.
- Control costs

6.0 ACTION PLAN

Objective	Action	Performance indicator	By whom
1.7.1 Considerably reduce impacts of existing weeds	All public lands to be inspected annually	100% of all roadsides, reserves and Travelling Stock Routes (TSR’s) inspected.	LCA weed officers & RLPB rangers
	Control methods to be carried out on all infestations on LCA & RLPB lands as seasonal conditions allow	Existing infestations on LCA/RLPB lands reduced by 80%	LCA weed officers & RLPB rangers
	All private properties identified as having infestations are to be inspected annually and regulatory action taken as required	100% of identified properties inspected Existing marginal infestations on private lands reduced by 60% Existing rare and isolated infestations on private lands reduced by 70%	Landholders & LCA weed officers
1.7.2 Prevent new weed problems	Inspect for Blackberry as part of routine property inspection program	Blackberry is included in the inspection routine	LCA weed officers & RLPB rangers
	Aspects of the rapid response program to be implemented when a new infestation is discovered	100% of located new infestations recorded and mapped 100% of new infestations treated 100% of new infestations to be monitored and follow-up treatment programs implemented	Landholders, LCA weed officers & RLPB rangers
	All infestations to be contained to prevent new weed problems	Buffer zones established around sites known to be infested	Landholders, LCA weed officers & RLPB rangers
1.7.3 Improve coordination and cooperation	All infestations to be recorded and mapped	Maps produced and updated regularly Data recording standards adhered to	LCA weed officers & RLPB rangers
	Plan implementation to be	Review process (as outlined in	RPO, LCA

	monitored and reviewed	section 7.0) carried out	weed officers & RLPB rangers
	Actively seek partnerships with other weed management agencies	Partnerships developed where necessary	RPO, LCA weed officers & RLPB rangers
	Develop on-ground management plans with neighbouring landholders, LCA's and RLPB's	Plans of management entered into and partnerships developed with neighbouring landholders, LCA's and RLPB's	LCA weed officers & RLPB rangers
1.7.4 Raise awareness of weeds issues within region	Blackberry to be part of a regional weeds awareness program	Advertisements on television Field days held Displays at local shows attended by Weed Officers Weed pamphlets distributed to landholders during property inspections Weed Calendars distributed by LCA's and RLPB's	DPI, RPO, LCA weed officers & RLPB rangers

7.0 MONITOR AND REVIEW

There will be an annual review of the Blackberry Regional Management Plan to ensure the performance indicators are realistic and are being met. Member LCA/RLPB's weed officers and rangers will participate in the review process. This would include discussions on increases or decreases of range, new incursions, successful management strategies, expectations and results.

8.0 BENEFITS

The benefits of the successful implementation of this Regional Blackberry Management Plan would be:

- Reduced spread of blackberries onto prime grazing land equating to higher productivity.
- The protection of native flora and fauna leading to increased bio-diversity.
- The reinstatement of natural recreational/environmental areas.
- An upward trend in land prices.

9.0 RESOURCES

- Parsons, WT and Cuthbertson, EG (1992), *Noxious Weeds of Australia*. Inkata: Melbourne.
- Auld, BA and Medd, RW (1987), *Weeds*. Inkata Melbourne.
- Blood, Kate (2003), *Environmental Weeds*, Bloomings Books, Melbourne.