

VBTnews

VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE

THE CENTRAL GIPPSLAND WOODY WEEDS GROUP IS READY FOR THE 2015-16 BLACKBERRY SEASON, TARGETING THE BOOLLARRA REGION

To mark the beginning of the program, an information stand was set up at the Mid Valley Shopping Centre in Morwell, on the 5th of November.



CHARLES UBER AND HARRY PRICE- CENTRAL GIPPSLAND WOODY WEEDS GROUP INFORMATION STAND

Committee members, project officer and the VBT Executive Officer were in attendance to speak with members of the public about the program in Boolarra and provide information about blackberry control.

The group originally started as part of the Bushfire Recovery program after the 2009 fires, with a focus on woody weeds and blackberry in particular. The Project officer has engaged 182 landholders and motivated 92 to sign voluntary blackberry management agreements, resulting in 1200 hectares of blackberry mapped and 1000 hectares treated.

The main focus this year is to engage all major land managers in the Boolarra region including HVP plantations, Midway Plantations, Latrobe City Council and VicRoads. Already these organisations have participated in CGWWG meetings, outlining their control program in the target area.

Latrobe City Council has also sent correspondence on behalf of the group, promoting the program to private land holders in the region. As a result the project officer has received enquiries requesting a visit which includes mapping and a 3 year voluntary management agreement.

Although Boolarra is a priority for the group this season, landholders in Hazlewood South, Jeeralang, Budgerie, Yinnar South, Koornalla, Callignee, Callignee South and Traralgon are welcome to contact the project officer (0488 035 314) for a visit to discuss their blackberry management program.

The collaboration between private landholders, industry and public land managers underpins the success of the program run by CGWWG over the past 6 years. Providing best practice control information through visits from the project officer and maintaining connections with people as they undertake their control programs, leads to very good results.

Blackberryaction



PROJECT OFFICER CAM PATERSON, PICTURED WITH ONE OF THE GROUP'S CORFLUTE SIGNS



THE ADDITIONAL DEMONSTRATION SITE BEFORE TREATMENT

BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUPS ARE BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE FUTURE

Merton to Cathkin Blackberry Action Group

Merton to Cathkin Blackberry Action Group has been successful in connecting with the community and are closing in on their target of 60 landholder agreements. Part of their success is due to their innovative ideas.

The Merton to Cathkin Blackberry Action Group have lead the way in promoting their Community Partnership Program by designing and producing signs and other promotional materials, (some of these are pictured above), to promote blackberry control

Corflute signs have been given to land holders in highly visible areas who are participating in the group's community partnership program. They have also produced several posters advertising the 'free service' of the project officer which connects the community to the Merton to Cathkin Blackberry Action Group.

At events, the group distributes place cards on tables advertising the group's activities. This gives individuals the opportunity to 'put their hand up' for assistance on their property. Merton to Cathkin has shared these ideas with other blackberry groups, assisting them in promoting their community action in other regions.

Sandy Creek Woody Weed Action Group

The Mount Alexander Shire Council has sent over 200 letters to residents located between the townships of Maldon and Welshman's Reef for the Sandy Creek Woody Weed Action Group, outlining their Program for 2015-16. As a result 25 land holders have signed 3 year voluntary management agreements for this blackberry season, which is well on the way to reaching the target of 30 land holder agreements.

BLACKBERRY ACTION Non Chemical Control Demonstration Site

Observations and a second treatment of the product, which is accredited for use by organic growers, were conducted at the Towong Demonstration site on the 28th of September.

It was noted before the first treatment in March 2015, that grass covered blackberry on all demonstration plots.

Observations on the 28th of September showed a good level of control with only a small amount of regrowth at the base of the blackberry.

Observations also suggest that applying the product after mulching was more effective. When comparing the un-mulched sites, the double application produced more dead canes than on the single application site.

A new site was also set up on the 28th of September in a much drier zone on the property to compare the effects of moisture on results.

Observations and a third treatment will take place in February 2016 and will finish with observations in November 2016.

For more information on the methodology and results so far please visit the VBT website on www.vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au

Merton to Cathkin Demonstration Site

The Merton to Cathkin Blackberry Action Group completed a follow up field day on two properties in Gobur and Merton, which attracted a crowd of 30 people. The demonstration sites have been used to provide 'best practice' information on herbicide application.

COMMUNITY STORIES: Reclaiming Productive Land From Blackberries

Wayne and Karen Moroney, dairy farmers from Eskdale, have reclaimed 40 acres of blackberry-infested land for grazing with the intention of using it to raise their heifers.

This was the focus of a series of field days supported by the Mitta to Murray Blackberry Action Group, the North East Catchment Management Authority's 'Mentor Farms Program' and the Mitta to Murray Landcare Network.

The process of reclaiming the 40 acre block began in February 2014 with chemical treatment, followed by the removal of dead blackberry canes between April 2014 and February 2015. In March 2015 the blackberry regrowth was sprayed, the block was ploughed and treated with lime and planted with oats.

The reclaimed land is now being used for grazing young heifers, the future milkers of the dairy, which in the past have been sent off property at great expense to the business.

'My dad used to send heifers away to northern, warmer river flats for finishing off, but that's an expensive option. It's much easier and cheaper to manage from an existing resource', Karen said.

Wayne and Karen have invested a great deal of time and resources into this project with approximately \$8,000



WAYNE MORONEY, ESKDALE PROPERTY OWNER - RECLAIMING PRODUCTIVE LAND FROM BLACKBERRIES FIELD DAY

spent on contractors and materials, including fencing materials, chemicals, lime and fertiliser.

According to Karen the 80 hours of labour put in themselves was equally important. 'Like many dairy farmers, we are time poor and other priorities kept coming up', Karen said. The fact that money is a limiting factor means paying contractors \$50/hr to do the initial blackberry control was not an option.

The Moroney's are acutely aware of the need to maintain this 40 acre resource for years to come by promoting competition against weed species, in particular blackberry. A carefully managed grazing and weed management program will go a long way in achieving this.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GLYPHOSATE ON BLACKBERRY

In our previous edition of the VBT newsletter, we mentioned that the VBT had received enquiries about unsatisfactory results of Glyphosate. We asked people to give us their experiences using this chemical. The comments centred around poor control rates, the need for constant follow up, increased resistance, off target kills and improved conditions for weed invasion.

Bruce Marsh from the Merton to Cathkin Blackberry Action Group has sprayed on his property for a number of years with Glyphosate, according to the label, 'I noticed that blackberries I sprayed regrew and needed follow up the next year. The chemical seemed less effective in following years'. Bruce said. 'The Merton to Cathkin Blackberry Action Group's project officer suggested I try other chemicals, Triclopyr and Picloram, and results have improved remarkably'.

As Glyphosate is non-selective it can kill non-target species. Matt McEachran, Sandy Creek Woody Weed Action Group's project officer has observed poor control rates on blackberry while at the same time killing other species such as Dianella, Bursaria, Acacias and summer growing themeda triandra, leaving bare ground which often recolonises with weed species.

Project officer Cam Paterson from Up to Us Blackberry Action Group said that there is a glyphosate product which is registered for use around waterways however it will kill non target species including reeds and sedges. In other areas he uses Metsulfuron-methyl as this product has less impact on other species and a higher level of control on Blackberry.

Advice should be sought from your Rural Supplier about the most appropriate method of controlling your blackberry and always consider the OHS aspects of using chemical. The Blackberry Control Manual, available on the VBT Website, is a recommended resource.

NEWS IN BRIEF



PHYSICAL CONTROL

CIBAG Public Education Day – 5 Dec 2015

Twenty-six people met at the new Agnes Falls Rotunda to celebrate the success of the blackberry program and prepare landholders for the upcoming season. The day included guest speaker Matt Khoury on the impact of Blackberry on fish species. Prizes were also awarded including herbicide spray and contractor labour!

Volunteer Chemical Treatment Program

Dabyminga Blackberry Action group will undertake a volunteer chemical treatment program as a community service this season. Members of the group will spray blackberry for landholders who physically are unable to spray or have financial constraints. Other members will help with provision of chemical and funds to upkeep the community spray unit.



MATT KHOURY, GUEST SPEAKER
TALKS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF BLACKBERRY ON FISH SPECIES

Frequently Asked Questions

As a result of our VBT Community Service Announcements we have received enquiries about how to best apply physical control measures to blackberry infestations. We would like to hear from anyone with experience using non chemical methods, success rates and whether they were integrated or stand alone.

Just announced

Phytophthora bilobang has been occurring naturally in South West Western Australia (Warren and Donnelly River Catchments) causing significant dieback to blackberry since 2006. This potential bio-control agent will be tested in trials across Australia to assess suitability in different conditions.

This research is part of a larger project totalling \$1.8 million funded by the Federal Government, Rural Research for Development for Profit Program, which targets 6 national priority agricultural weeds (parkinsonia, parthenium, blackberry, silverleaf nightshade, cylindropuntia, gorse).

Success will be achieved by fast-tracking delivery of eight biocontrol agents to producers and is expected to reduce weed competition and herbicide use. There will be external contributions from the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources and the Meat and Livestock Association as well. CSIRO will lead the research through scientist Louise Morin over the next 3 years.



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