

# VBTnews

VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE

## CALCULATING THE BENEFIT OF CONTROLLING YOUR BLACKBERRY

New tool helps people make decisions about land affected by blackberry.

People looking to buy, sell or manage land will now be able to make better decisions about managing blackberry weed. A new cost benefit analysis modelling tool, developed by the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce (VBT) and professional Valuers, will assist land managers to calculate the cost of blackberry control and then determine the potential increase in production.

‘Blackberry is decreasing the value of many properties across the state and because it spreads quickly it can be expensive to control’ said Lyn Coulston, Chairperson of the VBT.

‘The Agricultural Productivity Tool highlights the economic impact of the weed on affected agricultural land and can be used by individual landholders making decisions about property management.

‘A loss of productivity and poor environmental outcomes are just two of the many negative impacts the weed can have on both private and public land.

‘We often get questions, not only from landowners, but also from people wanting to buy properties that are affected by blackberry, who want to know what it will cost and how long it will take to bring land into production.’



CONTROLLING BLACKBERRY USING BEST PRACTICE TECHNIQUES WILL INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY

### HOW IT WORKS

The calculator is a digital tool which allows land managers to input their property data, such as land class and terrain, to generate a profitability summary.

Users can define their own land capabilities, livestock carrying capacity, chemical treatment and other control methods used to tailor individual results.

Users can see labour and equipment costs that correspond to different blackberry control methods such as ground, aerial, spot spray and employing a contractor. A total cost for each control method is calculated so users can see which option best suits them and work out how much it will cost to bring land back into production.

Federally-funded, as part of the Weeds and Rabbits project, anyone can access the tool on the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce website: [vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au/agricultural-productivity-model/](http://vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au/agricultural-productivity-model/)

# Blackberryaction



## INVASIVE SPECIES FORUMS

Recently, the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce (VBT) co-hosted two invasive species forums, 'Demonstrating Effective Blackberry Control Techniques', funded by the Federal Government's Weeds and Rabbits Program.

These forums were undertaken in partnership with local communities including the City of Whittlesea and Whittlesea and Surrounds Blackberry Action Group, Yarra Ranges Shire Council, Wabbit Action Group Silvan and the Hepburn Shire Council.

These partnerships were pivotal in achieving tailored events and good attendances in both regions.

The first forum, held at Creswick in March in partnership with Hepburn Shire Council, featured demonstrations on mulching followed by best practice chemical control guidance.

Different types of mulching machinery available for woody weed control were demonstrated including a seven-metre reach-arm diamond mulching unit. Best practice chemical control methods were discussed which included application, timing, water quality and weather conditions.

The Creswick event was capped at 50 attendees, resulting in some people missing out. The VBT will now run a second event in spring, in the Hepburn Shire region.

The demonstration day at Silvan was co-hosted with the Wabbit Action Group Silvan (WAGS) and featured a discussion on site of the results of the group's blackberry control demonstration, including both mechanical and chemical control techniques.

This event also provided an opportunity to discuss the Queensland fruit fly and rabbit control programs and their associated benefits to the blackberry control programs.

## UAV DRONE DEMONSTRATION

WAGS committee member Gordon Chapman emphasised the importance of removing woody weed harbour such as blackberry as part of any rabbit control program and outlined the WAGS Pindone Bait release program.

Bronwyn Koll, Queensland Fruit Fly Coordinator in the Yarra Valley, explained the potential effects of Queensland fruit fly and the best way to prevent its establishment in the Silvan region. Bronwyn explained that weed species such as blackberry are potential hosts and distributors of this pest, which could devastate the Silvan horticultural industry.

Both forums also featured demonstrations on the use of drones and pine oil in blackberry control.

The demonstration of the 10-litre capacity UAV (drone) for chemical control application, showcased two modes of control allowing the device to follow a pre-programmed pattern of flight. It was emphasised that this will not replace broadacre spraying but will be useful in hard to access areas.

Representatives from Sustainable Formulations were in attendance to explain the results of the 'pine oil' demonstration set up prior to the events at both Silvan and Creswick. The product's mode of action breaks down the plant's cell wall, which is different to traditional translocating chemicals. Several applications of the product are required during the active growing season, and the key advantages of the product are its organic certification, it kills weed seed and can be applied after physical control such as mulching.

Demonstration videos on mulching, use of drones and pine oil can be viewed on the VBT YouTube Channel at [www.youtube.com/channel/UC9zbSO\\_ezSxIAfho6lF9PnQ](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9zbSO_ezSxIAfho6lF9PnQ)

## Successful Blackberry Control Through Collaboration - Eden Park Case Study

The Eden Park Case Study project in the Whittlesea district was funded by the Federal Government's Weeds and Rabbits Initiative. The project, a collaboration between the VBT, City of Whittlesea and Melbourne Water, involves a diverse mix of landholders from broadacre farms to recently subdivided smaller hobby farms and lifestyle properties.

The project features two landholders who have different motivations for controlling blackberry - one being environmental and the other agricultural productivity.

Nancy has been on her property for twenty years and has seen blackberry increase dramatically. She is interested in reducing the effect of blackberry on native species. 'We didn't want blackberries to take over the property but we wanted to encourage the native animals, and the native grasses and flowers. They're what I like around my property' she said.

Before Adrian acquired an interest in the family property at Eden Park, his attitude towards blackberry was very different to what it is now. He originally saw them as a tasty berry to eat, but he soon realised they effected his farming enterprise. 'When I first bought into the property five years ago it was overrun with blackberry. I'm really keen to fix this place up and make it more viable and eventually run more stock' he said.



ADRIAN - EDEN PARK LANDHOLDER  
'CONTROLLING BLACKBERRY TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY'

The City of Whittlesea sponsored the Eden Park project which employs a project officer for onsite visits to provide guidance to landholders in the Eden Park region, encouraging them to sign on to a voluntary management agreement. Both Nancy and Adrian have benefited from this support and have developed valuable links to other support organisations including Melbourne Water. An example of this support is Adrian's grant from Melbourne Water, via their River Health Incentives Program, to manage weeds on his property along Barbers Creek.

This project is a testament to the benefits of working together and collaborating with neighbours and relevant agencies to achieve a goal, whether it be environmental protection or improved agricultural productivity.

Please visit the VBT YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0svM8VfqRpY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0svM8VfqRpY) to watch the Eden Park Case Study video.

## MOOBAG - building long-lasting partnerships



DRONE IMAGE FROM FOOTAGE USED TO MAP  
BLACKBERRY DOWNSTREAM OF LAL LAL FALLS

### The Moobag project officer assisted the CHWA to map blackberry using a drone in steep hazardous terrain at Lal Lal Falls.

The Moorabool Blackberry Action Group will expand their engagement with landholders during the third year of the VBT's Community Partnership Program. The group plan to sign 15 new landholders to voluntary management agreements and reconnect with year 1 and 2 landholders. This will result in 48 active landholder agreements.

Moobag has already developed important partnerships with V/Line, Moorabool Shire Council (MSC) and the Central Highlands Water Authority (CHWA). This year, the MSC and V/Line supported Moobag's engagement program by controlling blackberry along 5 km of roadside and 20 km of railway track.

The Moobag project officer assisted the CHWA to map blackberry using a drone in steep hazardous terrain at Lal Lal Falls, which is a highly valued cultural heritage site. This technology will also be used to map inaccessible areas on private land this blackberry season.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### New VBT Facebook Social Media Campaign

In an attempt to reach a wider audience, the VBT will establish a Facebook page and launch an advertising campaign beginning in September 2019.

Over the last fifteen years the VBT has developed an extensive resource base located on the VBT website including best practice blackberry control information, community service announcements, case studies, control videos and presentations from events and workshops.

The VBT wants to encourage more people to visit the website and discover the best options for controlling blackberry in individual situations.

### Ideas To Control Blackberry

The VBT has had a great response to the invitation on the website to those who 'Need Ideas to Control Blackberry?' to provide a contact email and receive regular updates on blackberry control and be directly notified of events in their area. We receive many email enquiries about specific situations where land managers are looking for the best way to manage blackberry. Bimonthly updates are sent out and anyone who requires more tailored information can send an email or phone the Executive Officer.



PREVIOUS INVASIVE SPECIES FORUM: EDEN PARK

## BLACKBERRY CONTROL INFORMATION SESSION

OCTOBER 13TH

VBT/ West Strzelecki Blackberry Action Group  
Invasive Species Forum

TETOORA ROAD

More details to follow.

## Review of Information Pack for Interface Municipal Councils



Municipal councils are an important partner in disseminating information efficiently across their respective municipalities. The VBT has been working with representatives from the Municipal Councils that form a ring around metropolitan Melbourne (Interface Councils) to deliver a communication kit. The aim of the kit is to better equip Council staff in raising the awareness of their landholders about the impacts of blackberry and best practice control and encourage active participation in management on individual properties.

The communication kit includes a reference document, practical solutions for local councils and ready to go social media posts. The kit is suitable for Local Council channels, including councillors' social media platforms.

The next step will be an engagement program with Peri-urban Municipal Councils that border the growth zones around Melbourne and the regional cities.

*The communication pack includes helpful ideas for municipal councils, this includes organising a bus trip for community. Image (left): Upper Murray Bus Trip 2012 - Attendees learning about the effects of blackberry.*



## CONTACT

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