

VBTnews

VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE

PARTNERSHIPS AGAINST PESTS PILOT PROJECT

The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce (VBT) has successfully applied for the Victorian Government's Partnerships Against Pests Pilot project funding.

The project funding will enable the VBT to continue engaging with community as landholders seek blackberry control information. The initiative includes an Invasive Species Forum, several blackberry control demonstrations, and a case study.

The Invasive Species Forum will be an opportunity for the non-scientific community to hear about current and potential scientific solutions to curb the impacts of established pest species such as blackberry, gorse, pigs, and rabbits. The event will be held next year on the 15 March at the Melbourne Museum. Expert speakers from the University Melbourne, Curtin University, Deakin University and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry will focus on innovative solutions including gene drive technology.

Six blackberry control demonstrations will be co-hosted with local community, giving local landholders the opportunity to see firsthand what best-practice methods are available to control European blackberry.

'The project' case study will document a rehabilitation project on a decommissioned quarry at Beech Forest. The story will follow the landholders' journey after purchasing the property. The case study interviews will be filmed and made available on the VBT website and hardcopy format.



BLACKBERRY CONTROL DEMONSTRATION DAY
BEECH FOREST - 'THE QUARRY PROJECT SITE' 12 MARCH

RECOGNITION FOR COMMUNITY PEST GROUPS

Victoria's four Community Pest Management Groups (CPMGs) have been chosen to receive the Australian Biosecurity Award (ABA) in Canberra recently. The ABA's recognise individuals, groups and organisations that have shown commitment to supporting and promoting Australian biosecurity and the systems that underpin it.

The CPMGs were nominated by Agriculture Victoria to receive an award under the community category for their role in the Weeds and Rabbits Project. The four CPMGs Chairs recently received their award on behalf of their groups in Canberra.

The CPMGs include the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce, the Victorian Gorse Taskforce, Victorian Rabbit Action Network and Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party who formed part of the Delivery Leadership Group, the project steering committee for the Weeds and Rabbit Project.

CPMGs consist of volunteer community representatives, and contractors, who provide education, engagement and extension services to landowners affected by invasive species.

For further information on the Weeds and Rabbits Project visit weedsandrabbitsstory.com.

Blackberryaction



LYN COULSTON AT THE VICTORIAN WEEDS CONFERENCE

VICTORIAN WEEDS CONFERENCE MOUNT MACEDON

The VBT Chair Lyn Coulston, presented a discussion on 'Striking a balance - understanding community's expectations and encouraging responsible blackberry management in Victoria' to participants at the recent Victorian Weeds Conference at Mount Macedon on the 24 August.

The presentation focused on how the VBT interacts with the wider community and navigates the changing role of community and government in relation to established pests under the Catchment & Land Protection Act 1994.

Lyn highlighted the communities' expectation that Government would use enforcement to make landholders accountable especially when there are infested properties which threaten and undermine the work of neighbours to keep their properties Blackberry free. Lyn said 'enforcement on widespread pests is no longer a priority for Government. It is the responsibility of landholders to control weeds on their properties with community support from interest groups such as the VBT Community Partnership Groups.'

Lyn went on to say, 'The VBT uses a variety of engagement tools to encourage community to control blackberry. This includes the Community Partnership Program which enables a community to run their own program. Not all communities want to do this. That is why the VBT provides a variety of support and awareness tools and opportunities for interactive demonstration sessions in communities who request them. The demonstration days showcase a variety of control and application methods from traditional herbicide using a spray unit to drone technology and organic, mechanical and physical methods. Attendees can decide which ones are the most suited to their place and are encouraged to prepare a blackberry management plan for at least three years.'

The VBT now has a wide ranging resources library on the VBT website, television-radio commercial campaigns and social media channels'.



WHAT A DIFFERENCE THE GOATS HAVE MADE

WOODNOOK PROJECT: 'GOATS CHANGING THE LANDSCAPE - FOR THE BETTER'

The Woodnook project has made terrific gains in restoring a section of Dixons Creek near Yarra Glen. The relocatable fence funded by the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce secured goats that controlled weeds including blackberry during Spring and Summer last year.

The project is an initiative of the Northern Yarra Landcare Network supported by the Northern Yarra Blackberry Action Group, Melbourne Water, and adjacent landowners.

The project area is characterised by heavy infestations of blackberry which is inaccessible and potentially dangerous for spraying contractors to navigate.

Following the removal of goats, a flora assessment was undertaken to measure the change in flora composition. The assessment indicated a significant change where blackberry was the major understory species. The site is now seeing regrowth of several native species including sedges. The site will now be monitored for blackberry re-growth and controlled by chemical when required.

The Woodnook project team plan to attend the site in spring to shift the fence further downstream. Goats will arrive shortly after and the process repeated.

The project is anticipated to continue for the next 3-4 years. Please check out the video showing the results so far - impressive!
www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYwF5F5c11U

Goats used in this project were provided and actively managed by Colin Arnold - GRAZAWAY

RESEARCH: Queensland Fruit Fly linked to European blackberry

The VBT funded project investigating the link between Queensland Fruit Fly (QFF) and European blackberry has found evidence that QFF uses European blackberry as a host.

The VBT will adopt all recommendations from the final report which includes extending the sampling into the 2024 season to strengthen the dataset. The sampling will be more extensive and cover much of northern and north eastern Victoria with emphasis north of the divide. Ballarat and Geelong will be included .

The VBT Chair Lyn said, 'this is yet another reason to control blackberry, especially around horticultural areas, it is especially important that landholders do their bit and reduce the spread of QFF as well'.

The next round of sampling will begin this coming summer to coincide with the blackberries fruiting season.



SAMPLE SITE- FRUIT FLY TRAP, SHEPPARTON

FLOWERDALE GROUP READY FOR ACTION

Due to the floods in 2022, the Narran-Kurnong Flowerdale Blackberry Action Group postponed their VBT funded community project to address issues relating to infrastructure and animal welfare.

The community group have now decided the time is right for the engagement project to proceed. To launch the project a blackberry control demonstration day will be held on October 28th, coinciding with landholder visits by the groups' project officer. The visits will assist landholders to develop a long term plan of action in controlling European blackberry.

For more information on the Narran-Kurnong Flowerdale Blackberry Action Group , please contact the VBT.
vbt@vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au

Pheasant Creek Blackberry Action Group A SUCCESSFUL START



BLACKBERRY CONTROL DEMONSTRATION DAY
PHEASANT CREEK, 19 MARCH

What do you get when landholders and goats join forces? Answer- 'far less blackberry'

The Pheasant Creek Blackberry Action group is made up of several key partners including Murrindindi Shire Council, Parks Victoria, Yarra Valley Agri-Business-Queensland Fruit Fly Group, and local landholders. Their project officer successfully engaged with 20 landholders providing guidance on blackberry control.

Parks Victoria (PV) has been a major contributor to the project by controlling blackberry within the King Lake Reserve by using goats in conjunction with the VBT's relocatable fence. PV employees followed up with a brush cutter to remove the defoliated blackberry canes. The area will be monitored for regrowth and spot sprayed when required.

The Murrindindi Shire Council has committed to supporting the project by controlling blackberry on roadsides within the project area.

Further support by the VBT was provided for the program by providing funding for a blackberry control demonstration day. 40 people attended the event which featured drone and Eco blade technology and chemical control application demonstrations.

The group will commence a second year under the VBT's Community Partnership Program this coming spring.

Goats used in this project were provided and actively managed by Colin Arnold - GRAZAWAY.

MEDIA BLITZ - 'TV /RADIO' CAMPAIGN

The VBT began a media blitz in August. The Win TV and Ace Radio campaign will focus on landholder responsibility and the importance of 'planning.'

For the first time the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce will advertise on radio. The campaign will target 5 regions – Colac, Wangaratta, Hamilton, Warrnambool, and Traralgon, which are regions the VBT has identified as having a high level of community concern for blackberry. The radio campaign will also include a spot as 'Business of the Week' on the Libby Price program starting on the 18 September.



Upcoming events & courses - Sept/Oct

Victorian Blackberry Taskforce Blackberry Control Demonstration Days

Sunday 24 September, 10am-12pm
Co-hosted with North Harcourt Sedgwick
Landcare Network
Location: Sedgwick

Saturday 28 October - Time -TBC
Co-hosted with the Flowerdale Landcare Group
Location: Flowerdale Community Hall

These events will be an opportunity for landholders to see first hand what is available to control blackberry. The event will demonstrate organic, chemical and physical control options. For more information, please contact us: vbt@vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au

The Victorian Rabbit Action Network 'Leadership in Rabbit Control Course' 2023 is open to all Victorians currently involved in the management of rabbits on private or public land.

When? Arrive Oct 25, 2023 – Depart 27 October 2023

Where? Phillip Island Cowes, Victoria

The Leadership in Rabbit Control Course is a mentor course that includes both classroom and practical field-based training. Following the training, participants will be offered the opportunity to form a group or 'Learning Network' who can meet, share ideas, and discuss rabbit management.

Twenty positions are available for the 2023 Course. VRAN encourage diversity in our Leadership in Rabbit Control Course 2023, and we want people with a range of perspectives and experiences to be involved. VRAN are seeking a balance of representation by gender, industry, regions, community groups, Traditional Owners, land managers, government agencies and other professionals.

More information see www.vran.com.au



CONTACT

vbt@vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au

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