

tussock times

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Inside this issue

- Extension officers on the ground
- Western Grassland Reserves
- Meet your community representative
- New community engagement officer
- \$25,000 for Parks Victoria to work on serrated tussock
- New strategy on the horizon
- Inverleigh case study
- DPI updates
- Voluntary compliance success in Wingeel
- New fluproponate research
- Caring for Our Country Grants

Serrated tussock extension officers on the ground

Two extension officers are now on ground in the Port Phillip and Corangamite catchments raising awareness and providing an educational service to landholders about serrated tussock.

Mandy Coulson has been working in the Wingeel and Barunah Plains areas since joining the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party in September 2010. Mandy has inspected 39,000ha in the Barunah Plains area and of that, 356ha were infested with an average 1 percent cover of serrated tussock.



Mandy Coulson

Jeff Larsen came on board with the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party in July 2011. Jeff has been focusing his attention on properties in the Clarkefield area.

Mandy and Jeff are continuing to promote best practice management and helping these communities voluntarily manage their serrated tussock.

Mandy can be contacted on:
0488 526 123 or
mcoulson@exemail.com.au

Jeff can be contacted on:
0432 681 314 or
jlarsenfamily@southernphone.com.au



Jeff Larsen

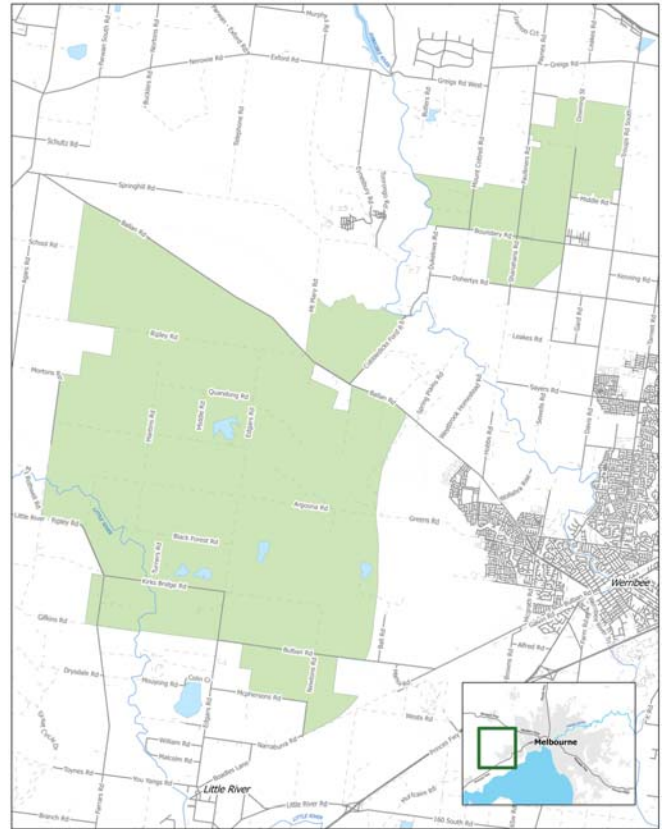
Working party helping to protect future grassland reserves

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party has secured funding from the Department of Sustainability and Environment to perform strategic serrated tussock control work in and around the developing Western Grassland Reserves.

As a result of the recent shift in the urban growth boundary, 15,000ha of land outside the new boundary to the west and north of Werribee is being acquired to form the Western Grasslands Reserves. The reserves will act to offset the impacts of development, as required under Victoria’s Native Vegetation Management policy and the Commonwealth’s Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation legislation.

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party is working in partnership with the Western Melbourne Catchments Network to position project officers on the ground to assess, map, and where appropriate, treat infestations in and around the proposed reserve areas. Properties situated to the north and west of the planned reserves will also be visited to engage a broader community. With the ability of serrated tussock to spread by wind, greater success can be achieved with widespread community action.

For more information on the Western Grassland Reserves visit www.dse.vic.gov.au or contact **Richard Boekel** at DSE Geelong on 03 5226 4576 or richard.boekel@dse.vic.gov.au



Western Grassland Reserves



Location of the Western Grassland Reserves, west of Melbourne.

For more information on the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party’s involvement with the Western Grassland Reserves, please contact Executive Officer Roger MacRaidl on 5366 0024 or roger.macraidl@dpi.vic.gov.au



Example of grassland of the area

Meet your community representative

Peter Lindeman had no idea what serrated tussock was until it appeared on the 1335ha property he was managing in the early 1990s.

The push to get all land managers aware of the serrated tussock issue and have the control of serrated tussock on their annual management calendars influenced Peter to join the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party.

Sixteen years later, Peter is still an active member of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party and has held the positions of chair, vice chair, and community representative. During his time on the working party, developing a long term strategy for the management of serrated tussock and securing initial funding of over \$900,000 in the 1990s have been some of the highlights for Peter.

Peter explains that seeing the community gain awareness of the serrated tussock issue while working with like-minded people has been the one of the benefits to joining the VSTWP. He looks forward to working to secure more government funding to manage serrated tussock into the future.

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) is interested in new members to join the current team of highly skilled volunteers who share a state-wide focus on serrated tussock management.

The VSTWP is comprised of community representatives working in partnership with a range of stakeholders including: the Department of Primary Industries, Catchment Management Authorities, municipal councils and the Department of Sustainability and Environment.



Peter Lindeman

Members are required to attend quarterly meeting held in Geelong, Bacchus Marsh and Melbourne (remuneration of meeting costs available). Occasionally commitment outside of meetings is required for the review, comment and endorsement of documents or presenting VSTWP information at other groups impacted by serrated tussock.

The VSTWP invites nominations from people who have an interest in the management of serrated tussock. A varied range of skill sets are required, so see what you can bring to the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party.

For further information, please contact Alison Head on 5366 0028 or alison.head@dpi.vic.gov.au

Introducing serrated tussock community engagement officer

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party and DPI now have a new Serrated Tussock Community Engagement Officer. Alison Head began in July and is based at the DPI Bacchus Marsh Office.

Alison hopes to continue to raise the awareness of the serrated tussock issue and the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party in the Victorian community.

Alison has come to the role after working in the Invasive Plants and Animals Operations Branch in DPI in service delivery, established invasive animals, new and emerging invasive plants, and industry engagement.

Alison Head can be contacted on 5366 0028 or 0419 049 908, or at alison.head@dpi.vic.gov.au

Parks Victoria armed with \$25,000 to tackle serrated tussock

Parks Victoria has successfully secured Good Neighbour Program funding to tackle serrated tussock. Inverleigh and Boonderoo nature conservation reserves (NCR), both found in the Golden Plains Shire, have been identified for a \$25,000 of funding over the next year to prevent the spread of serrated tussock from the reserves to neighbouring properties.

Higher than normal rainfall conditions in the region have caused a mass germination of serrated tussock seedlings, and it is anticipated that existing mature plants will produce a larger quantity of seeds in the wetter conditions. By undertaking a control program, Parks Victoria hopes to decrease the number of seedlings reaching maturity and to prevent the mature plants from seeding.

Both Inverleigh NCR and Boonderoo NCR are surrounded by cropping and livestock agricultural properties, which actively control serrated tussock. Funding from the Good Neighbour Program and Parks Victoria, along with ongoing support from community groups, will see successful serrated tussock management in the nature conservation reserves. This program will improve neighbour relations and contribute to the ongoing protection of threatened species in the area.

For more information on these projects, please contact Mark Whyte – Ranger Team Leader on 5282 3356 or mwhyte@parks.vic.gov.au



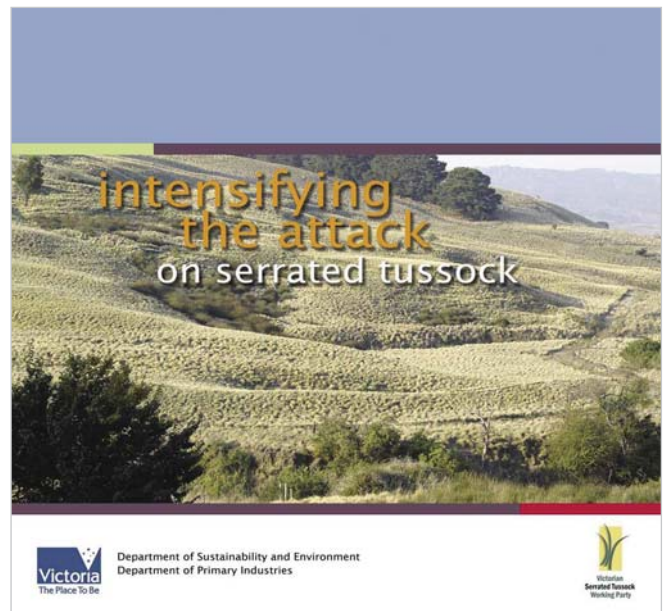
Serrated tussock plants in Boonderoo nature conservation reserve.

New serrated tussock strategy arriving soon

Since 2005, the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party has been directed by the strategy ‘Intensifying the attack on serrated tussock 2005-2010’.

The strategy has now reached the end of its timeframe and the Working Party has engaged the services of Roberts Evaluation to assess the effectiveness of this strategy to inform the development of a subsequent strategy. With the surveys and interviews to evaluate the old strategy now completed, work is well underway on the new strategy.

The new strategy will be ready for launch shortly, so keep an eye out for some great information to help inform your serrated tussock planning and funding applications. The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party looks forward to using the new strategy to lead and support the community in this encouraging time of action on serrated tussock.



The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party strategy ‘Intensifying the attack on serrated tussock 2005 – 2010.’

Did you know?

- **Did you know** that serrated tussock seed heads can disperse up to 20km away from their parent plant?
- **Did you know** that pastures that can normally carry 7 – 15 dry sheep equivalent (DSE) per hectare can be reduced to a carrying capacity of only 0.5 DSE per hectare if heavily infested with serrated tussock? *(Campbell and Vere 1995)*
- **Did you know** that the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party is working on a new strategy for serrated tussock? Keep an eye out for it coming soon.

Serrated tussock success in working progress

Mandy Coulson

Over the past five years, landholders Chris and Paul have been tackling serrated tussock on their 51ha property at Inverleigh. Having spent most of his life working within the local area, Chris was well aware of serrated tussock. However it wasn't until the end of year two, that Chris and Paul realised that ongoing commitment was needed to keep this invasive species under control.

Chris knew he needed to devise an achievable plan to work towards controlling serrated tussock on their property, with short and long term goals. In the short term, the landholders decided to concentrate their effort on controlling serrated tussock infestations close to the boundary and along significant natural assets, in this case the Warrambine creek.

“The first year was the most challenging, deciding where to start, and the best management. We had a light scattered infestation throughout the olive plantation and a more dense infestation nearer the waterway and adjoining paddocks. The management of productive land was quite easy. We decided to sow the arable paddocks to crop and maintain any serrated tussock along fence lines and on dam banks.

The more difficult areas to manage were amongst the olive trees and along the banks of the waterway. A combination of chemical and mechanical control methods was used”.

The second year was all about continuing an intense control program, killing new seedlings, controlling any missed plants from year one and preventing seed set. This intense program continued into year three. Now well into year four, Chris and Paul have embarked on a longer term management plan, planting over 5,500 trees on the banks of the Warrambine creek.

“Our vision is to enhance this area, to create habitat for bird and native animals. We realise that serrated tussock in this area will need to be controlled and maintained vigilantly in the future. We've planted trees quite densely to help shade out serrated tussock plants and intercept any likely windborne seed.”

Each year the effort has become less, however monitoring to avoid further spread and cost is necessary.

‘Having Mandy visit our property in year four through the VSTWP serrated tussock voluntary compliance program, made all the hard work worth while. She was able to see where we had come from, with maps and property walk and understand our commitment towards serrated tussock. Although we were already working on a serrated tussock plan, it's important that surrounding properties are also on board. If everyone works together to control serrated tussock in the area, we can at least contain serrated tussock infestations and keep it under control within the Wingeel district’.



Chris and Paul are using a combination of control methods to manage serrated tussock on their land.

On the search for serrated tussock at Bellbrae

One hundred and ninety six Bellbrae properties will be searched for serrated tussock in coming months as part of a Department of Primary Industries (DPI) containment project.

Serrated tussock is an emerging issue in the Bellbrae area and DPI officers are concerned landholders may be unfamiliar with the appearance of the weed and unaware of the threat it poses to agriculture and the natural environment.

DPI Biosecurity Officer Bill Whiteside said the focus on Bellbrae was part of a broader approach being undertaken by the department to contain serrated tussock infestations and prevent it from spreading further in the Corangamite catchment.

“The inspections also provide an opportunity for DPI officers to discuss identification and control options with Bellbrae landholders, and provide advice on how they can prevent serrated tussock from establishing itself on their property.”

Mr Whiteside said serrated tussock was classified as a Regionally Controlled Weed within the Corangamite Catchment Area.

“This means, landholders are responsible for preventing the growth and spread of serrated tussock on their property,” he said.

“Where infestations are found, we will work with landholders to ensure serrated tussock plants on their property are treated prior to seeding in spring in an effort to reduce its potential to spread across the landscape.”

Once serrated tussock has established, it’s very difficult and costly to manage. Mature plants grow to around 60 centimetres in height and can produce more than 100,000 seeds. The seeds can remain viable in the soil for up to 15 years.

Over 500 Port Phillip properties inspected for serrated tussock

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is cracking down on serrated tussock in the Port Phillip Catchment, inspecting over 500 properties in the region for the regionally controlled weed this year.

DPI Biosecurity Area Leader Chelsea Wardrope said that of the 500 properties inspected, 40 properties were issued with a Directions Notice to control serrated tussock prior to spring.

“The majority of these landowners have now complied with Directions Notices, undertaking control measures to a high standard,” Ms Wardrope said.

“Biosecurity officers are in the process of completing final inspections on those properties still outstanding, sending a clear message to landowners that infestations must be controlled.”

Ms Wardrope said DPI supports landholders who are taking action against weeds, such as the owner of a Forbes property who has been working with the department since 2001 to prevent an isolated infestation of serrated tussock on his property from spreading.

“A recent inspection of this property revealed a significant reduction of the original infestation, but this has only been achieved through the use of best practice management and constant vigilance by the land manager,” she said.

“On the flip-side, a penalty infringement notice of \$489 has been issued to a landowner in Darraweit Guim for failing to control serrated tussock on his property.

“Landowners have a legal responsibility to manage invasive plants and animals on their property to ensure they don’t adversely affect agricultural production on neighbouring farms or impact on the natural environment. If they don’t, they are liable for fines up to \$29,000.”

Ms Wardrope said DPI, in conjunction with the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party, was taking action to prevent further establishment of serrated tussock outside of Melbourne; working toward the eradication of isolated infestations and reducing pathways of spread.



DPI officers Deven McPhan and Chelsea Wardrope inspecting a property with serrated tussock. DPI has inspected 500 properties for serrated tussock this year.

Voluntary compliance works in Wingeel

Mandy Coulson

Tim Cowper and his family purchased a property in Wingeel six years ago. Prior to this they had owned and managed a large farming enterprise in NSW. Upon his move to Victoria, Tim had heard about serrated tussock, however he wasn't aware it had found its way into the mixed farming district of Wingeel.

A visit by a Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party extension officer, through its voluntary compliance program, helped Tim become more familiar with this invasive plant and source the

necessary technical advice on its control and management. Through this free program, Tim received a property visit, a map of any identified serrated tussock infestations, necessary technical advice and ongoing extension.

'The serrated tussock extension role has been fundamental to the future of my farming enterprise. If these plants were not identified, then the remainder of our property could possibly be under severe threat', said Tim.

'We are now able to direct our energies to areas known to have serrated tussock infestations and undertake appropriate control measures'.

The Cowper's serrated tussock control program will be ongoing, especially in areas with difficult terrain.

New research works towards understanding the interactions between native grasses and flupropanate

Recent research into flupropanate use has shown that its effect on native grass species is dependent on the application rates and other site-specific variables. The management of broadleaf weeds and annual grasses was also seen to improve the likelihood of native grass recovery after flupropanate application.

Flupropanate is a common herbicide used to manage serrated tussock infestations, but can also impact native grass species.

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party commissioned DPI Weed Sciences to conduct trials and table a report on the non-target effects of flupropanate on a range of native and improved pasture species.

Field trials were set up at Balliang West, Werribee and Oaklands Junction in Victoria where varying flupropanate rates were applied during 2009. Measurements of basal cover were recorded for the different rate applications of flupropanate over a 604 to 660 day period.

The overall effect of flupropanate differed between the trial sites and this may have been influenced by the initial seed bank and composition of the pasture as well as soil characteristics.

It was also noted that the management of annual and broadleaf weed species reduced competition and allowed some native species, such as stipa, to regenerate post flupropanate application.

This research supports the message from the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party that encouraging strong, competitive pastures, such as native grasses, to regenerate through control of annual and broadleaf weed species also helps to out-compete vulnerable and slow growing serrated tussock seedlings. Successful management of serrated tussock needs to include strategies such as herbicide application, competition planting, physical removal and spread prevention techniques.

For more information on this flupropanate field trial, please contact Charles Grech – Research Scientist Weed Sciences on 03 9217 4120 or charles.grech@dpi.vic.gov.au

More information on effective serrated tussock management can be found on the National Best Practice Management Manual for Serrated Tussock. For a copy, please contact Alison Head 5366 0028 or alison.head@dpi.vic.gov.au

Corangamite communities caring for our country

In 2009, the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party gained funding from the Caring for our Country Community Action Grants. Through this, the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party was able to provide grants to three community groups in the Corangamite catchment to raise the awareness of serrated tussock.

The Surf Coast and Inland Plains Landcare Network (SCIPN) received funding to provide extension services, identification, and management advice to landowners around the Lake Modewarre area with the aim of preventing spread of serrated tussock to assets such as Lake Modewarre and surrounding agricultural land. Using the funding, the SCIPN was able to inspect 50 properties for serrated tussock, hold two field days and information sessions, and hold two meetings with key stakeholder groups. Of the 50 properties inspected, 32 infestations were found and mapped on 20 properties. Affected landowners received an extension program including technical expertise on identification, control and management.

Woody Yaloak Catchment Group used their funding to work with the Misery Moonlight, Rokewood, and Mt Mercer Landcare groups to conduct an awareness and education campaign to build the capacity of landholders to identify small, isolated serrated tussock plants. A farm walk on a property which had previously treated serrated tussock was facilitated by the group and was supported by DPI and Golden Plains Shire. After attending the sessions, landholders were encouraged to inspect their properties for serrated tussock leading to several follow up property visits.

Identification and discussion of serrated tussock was the aim of the Geelong Landcare Network's application for funding. The network used their money to set up information displays at several community events. Clear, acrylic boxes were produced to display samples of serrated tussock, look-a-like native species and other weed species, such as Chilean needle grass. Demonstrations of serrated tussock identification were conducted with the aid of the samples and over several community events in the area, over 350 landholders were engaged.

This provides an excellent example of a community led approach to the management of serrated tussock in this region and an example the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party hopes is built on into the future.

Contributions & Feedback

Thank you to those who contributed to this edition of the Tussock Times.

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party welcomes your contributions and feedback at any time.

For contributions, feedback or to be added to the mailing list, please contact:

Alison Head,
*Serrated Tussock Community
Engagement Officer*

Phone: (03) 5366 0028 or 0419 049 908
Email: alison.head@dpi.vic.gov.au

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More information on serrated tussock can be found on the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party website: www.serratedtussock.com, at DPI online: www.dpi.vic.gov.au or by contacting DPI on 136 186.

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